



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

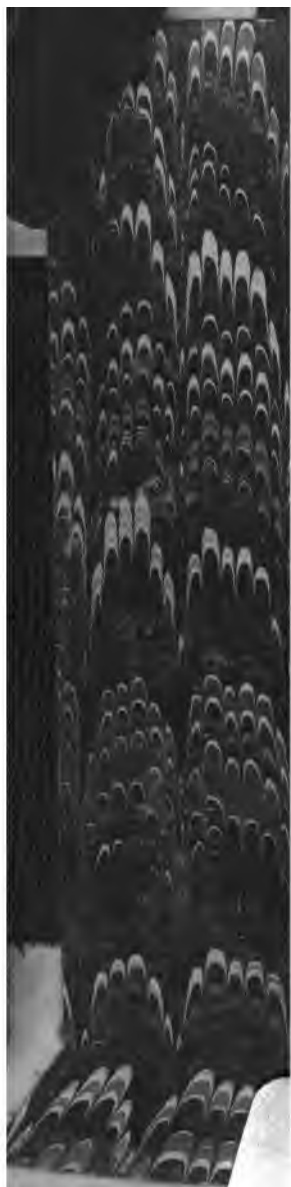
We also ask that you:

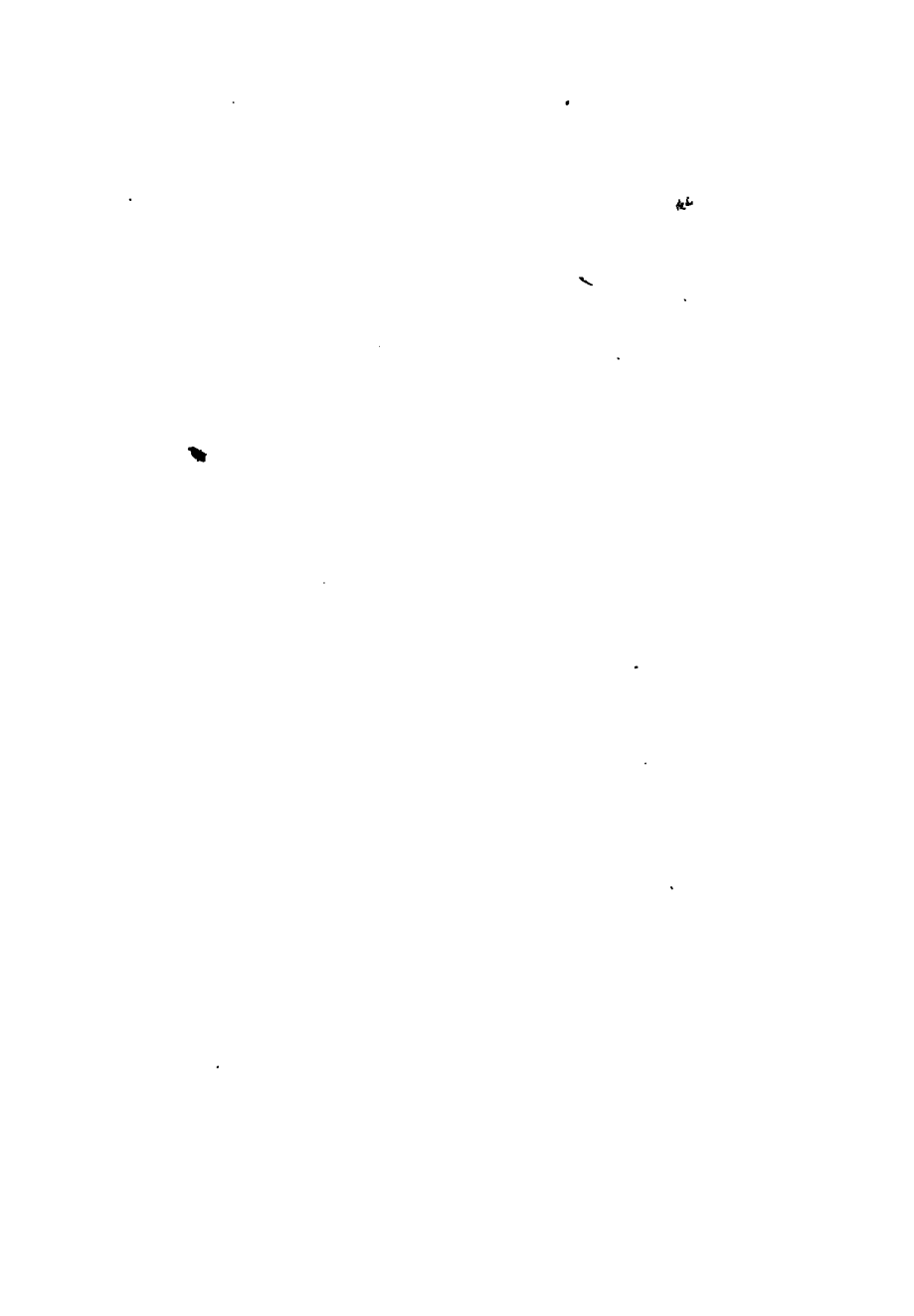
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







—

THE
WIDOW BARNABY.

BY

FRANCES TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE VICAR OF WREKILL," "A ROMANCE OF VIENNA," &c., &c.

—
NEW EDITION.
—

LONDON:
WARD AND LOCK, 158, FLEET STREET.

—
1857.

LONDON :
PETER AND GALPIN, LA BELLE SAUVAGE YARD,
LUDGATE HILL.

THE WIDOW BARNABY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FAMILY OF THE FUTURE MRS. BARNABY.—
FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.—MATERNAL LOVE.—PREPARATIONS FOR
A FÊTE.

MISS MARTHA COMPTON, and Miss Sophia Compton, were, some five-and-twenty years ago, the leading beauties of the pretty town of Silverton in Devonshire.

The elder of these ladies is the person I propose to present to my readers as the heroine of my story; but, ere she is placed before them in the station assigned her in my title-page it will be necessary to give some slight sketch of her early youth, and also such brief notice of her family as may suffice to make the subsequent events of her life, and the persons connected with them, more clearly understood.

The Reverend Josiah Compton, the father of my heroine and her sister, was an exceedingly worthy man, though more distinguished for the imperturbable tranquillity of his temper, than either for the brilliance of his talents or the profundity of his learning. He was the son of a small landed proprietor at no great distance from Silverton, who farmed his own long-descended patrimony of three hundred acres with skilful and unwearied industry, and whose chief ambition in life had been to see his only son Josiah privileged to assume the prefix of *reverend* before his name. After three trials, and two failures, this blessing was at last accorded, and his son ordained, by the help of a very good-natured examining chaplain of the then Bishop of Exeter.

This rustic, laborious, and very happy squire lived to see his son installed Curate of Silverton, and blessed with the *hand of the dashing* Miss Martha Wisett, who, if her peti-

gree was not of such respectable antiquity as that of her bridegroom, had the glory of being accounted the handsomest girl at the Silverton balls; and if her race could not count themselves among the landed gentry, she enjoyed all the consideration that a fortune of one thousand pounds could give, to atone for any mortification which the accident of having a *ot-devant* tallow-chandler for her parent might possibly occasion.

But, notwithstanding all the pride and pleasure which the squire took in the prosperity of this successful son, the old man could never be prevailed upon by all Mrs. Josiah's admirable reasonings on the rights of primogeniture, to do otherwise than divide his three hundred acres of freehold in equal portions between the Reverend Josiah Compton, his son, and Elizabeth Compton, spinster, his daughter.

It is highly probable, that had this daughter been handsome, or even healthy, the proud old yeoman might have been tempted to reduce her portion to the charge of a couple of thousand pounds or so upon the estate; but she was sickly, deformed, and motherless; and the tenderness of the father's heart conquered the desire which might otherwise have been strong within him, to keep together the fields which for so many generations had given credit and independence to his race. To leave his poor little Betsy in any degree dependent upon her fine sister-in-law was, in short, beyond his strength; so the home croft, and the long fourteen, the three linn crofts, the five worthies, and the ten-acre clover bit, together with the farm-house and all its plenishing, and one half of the live and dead farming stock, were bequeathed to Elizabeth Compton and her heirs for ever — not perhaps without some hope, on the part of her good father, that her heirs would be those of her reverend brother also; and so he died, with as easy a conscience as ever rocked a father to sleep.

But Mrs. Josiah Compton, when she became Mrs. Compton, with just one half of the property she anticipated, waxed exceeding wrath; and though her firm persuasion, that "the hideous little crook-back could not live for ever," greatly tended to console and soothe her, it was not without very constant reflections on the necessity of keeping on good terms with her, lest she might make as "unnatural a will as her father did before her," that she was enabled to resist the temptation of abusing her openly every time they met; a temptation

increased, perhaps, by the consciousness that Miss Betsy held her and all her race in the most sovereign contempt.

Betsy Compton was an odd little body, with some vigour of mind, and frame too, notwithstanding her deformity; and as the defects in her constitution showed themselves more in her inability to endure fatigue, than in any pain or positive suffering, she was likely to enjoy her comfortable independence considerably longer, and considerably more, than her sister thought it all reasonable in Providence to permit.

The little lady arranged her affairs, and settled her future manner of life, within a very few weeks after her father's death, and that without consulting brother, sister, or any one else; yet it may be doubted if she could have done it better had she called all the parish to counsel.

She first selected the two pleasantest rooms in the house for her bed-room and sitting-room, and then skilfully marked out the warmest and prettiest corner of the garden, overlooking some of her own rich pastures, with the fine old grey tower of Silverton in the distance, as the place of her bower, her flower-garden, and her little apiary. She then let the remainder of her house, and the whole of her well-conditioned dairy-farm, for three hundred pounds a year, with as much waiting upon as she might require, as much cream, butter, milk, and eggs as she should use, and as much fruit and vegetables as her tenants could spare — together with half a day's labour every week for her tiny flower-garden.

She had no difficulty in finding a tenant upon these terms: the son of a wealthy farmer in the neighbourhood had a bride ready as soon as he could find a farm-house to put her into, and a sufficient dairy upon which to display her well-learned science. Miss Betsy's homestead was the very thing for them. The bride's portion was five hundred pounds: for the purchase of the late Squire Compton's furniture and the half of his fine stock of cows, &c. &c., the which was paid down in Bank of England notes within ten minutes after the lease was signed, and being carefully put into the funds by Miss Betsy, became, as she said to herself (but to nobody else), a sort of nest egg, which, as she should only draw out the interest to lay it in again in the shape of principal, would go on increasing till she might happen to want it; so that, upon the whole, the style and scale of her expenses being taken in

consideration, it would have been difficult to find any lady, of any rank, more really and truly independent than Miss Betsy.

She felt this, and enjoyed it greatly. Now and then, indeed, as she remembered her old father, and his thoughtful care for her, her sharp black eyes would twinkle through a tear; but there was more softness than sorrow in this; and a more contented, or, in truth, a more happy spinster might have been sought in vain, far and near, notwithstanding her humped back.

Far different was the case of those who inherited the other moiety of the estate, called Compton Basett. The reverend Josiah, indeed, was himself too gentle and kind-hearted to feel anger against his father, or a single particle of ill-will towards his sister; yet was he as far from sharing her peace and contentment as his disappointed and vituperative wife. How, indeed, can any man hope to find peace and contentment, even though he has passed the rubicon of ordination, and has been happy enough to marry the favourite flirt of ten successive regiments, if he be never permitted to close his eyes in sleep till he has been scolded for an hour, and never suffered to wake at any signal, save the larum of his lady's tongue.

It was in vain that day and night he continued submissively to reiterate the phrases, "to be sure, my dear," . . . "certainly," . . . "there is no doubt of it," . . . "he ought not to have done so, my love," . . . "you are quite right, my dear," . . . and the like. All this, and a great deal more, submission and kindness was in vain; Mrs. Compton's complainings ceased not, and, what was harder still, she always contrived by some ingenious mode of reasoning to prove that all the mischief which had happened was wholly and solely her husband's fault.

Meanwhile the two little girls sent to bless this union of masculine softness and feminine hardness grew on and prospered, as far as animal health went, just as much as if their father were not taking to smoking and hot toddy as a consolation for all his sorrows, or their mother to a system of visiting and gossiping, which left her no time, had she possessed the talent, to do more for their advantage than take care that they had enough to eat. They were very fine *on Sundays, or whenever their ma' expected company; and not too dirty at other times to pass muster at the day-school,*

at which they were destined to receive all the education which fate intended for them.

Miss Betsy, little as she admired her sister-in-law, and dearly as she loved her sunny garden in summer, and her snug chimney-corner in winter, now and then left both to pass a few hours in Silverton; for she loved her brother, despite the weakness of character which appeared to her keen faculties to be something very nearly approaching fatuity; and being as well aware as the prettiest young lady in the town could be, that she was herself totally unfit to be married, she looked to his children with the interest with which human beings are apt to consider those who must become the possessors of all they leave behind.

For many years Miss Betsy looked forward with hope for one of two greatly desired events. That most coveted was the death of her sister-in-law; the other, and for many years the most probable, was the birth of a male heir to her brother.

But time wore away, and both were abandoned. Had it been otherwise, had Miss Betsy seen a male Compton ready to unite in his own person all the acquired and inherited honours of his twaddling father, and all the daily increasing hoard that she was herself accumulating, her temper of mind would probably have been very different. As it was, she looked upon the little girls as much more belonging to their mother than to their father; and the steady thriftiness, which, had it been pursued for the sake of a nephew, would have had some mixture of generous devotion in it, now that its result could only benefit nieces, by no means very dearly loved, seemed to threaten the danger of her becoming saving for mere saving's sake.

There was, however, in the heart of Miss Betsy much to render such an incrustation of character difficult; but there was also much to displease her in those who alone could claim her kindness on the plea of kindred; so that the most acute observer might have been at a loss to say what tone her vexed temper might finally take towards them.

Nevertheless, the two young sisters, at the respective ages of fifteen and seventeen, were as forward and handsome girls as ever drew the attention of a country town. They were equally handsome, perhaps, though very unlike. Martha was tall

dark-eyed, fresh-coloured, bold-spirited, and believed in her heart that she was to be called "my lady," and to drive in a coach and four. Sophia, the younger girl, was less tall and less bright-coloured; her hair was light, and her eyes, though their lashes were black, were of the softest grey. Her chief beauty, however, consisted in a complexion of great delicacy, and a mouth and teeth that could hardly be looked at without pleasure, even by cross Miss Betsy herself.

Miss Martha Compton was a young lady endowed with a vast variety of brilliant talents. She could dance every night, and very nearly all night long, though she had only learned for six weeks; she could make pasteboard card-boxes and screens, work satin-stitch, and (like most other clever young ladies bred in a country town abounding with officers) quote the oft profaned lyrics of Tom Moore.

The reputation of her sister for talents rested on a basis much less extended; it would indeed have been a false concord to talk of her talents, for she had but one in the world. Untaught, and unconscious of the power nature had bestowed, she sang with the sweet shrillness of the lark; and had science been set to work upon her for six months, Silverton might have boasted one of the finest native voices in the kingdom.

Mrs. Compton was proud of both her daughters; and however difficult it might be to procure shoes and gloves out of an income of somewhat less than four hundred pounds a year, the winter balls of Silverton never opened till the Miss Comptons were ready to stand up.

Had she been a little less brutally cross to her poor husband, Mrs. Compton would really at this time have been almost interesting from the persevering industry and ingenuity with which she converted the relics of her own maiden finery into fashionable dancing dresses for her girls. And on the whole the Miss Comptons were astonishingly well dressed; for, besides the above-mentioned hoards, every article of the family consumption was made to contribute to the elegance of their appearance. Brown sugar was substituted for white at the morning and the evening meal; the butcher's bills were kept down wonderfully by feeding the family upon tripe twice a week; the home-brewed was lowered till the saving in malt for one year bought two glazed calico slips, four pair of long white gloves, and a bunch of carnations for Martha and of

lilies for Sophia. Nothing, in short, was overlooked or forgotten that could be made to distil one drop of its value towards decorating the beauties of Silverton.

Few subjects have furnished more various or more beautiful images for the poet's pen than maternal fondness. From the heart-stirring fury of the dauntless lioness when her young ones are threatened, down to the patient hen red-breast, as she sits abroad, lonely, fasting, and apart from all the joys of birdhood, awaiting the coming life of her loved nestlings . . . in short, from one extremity of animal creation to the other, volumes of tender anecdotes have been collected illustrative of this charming feature of female nature; and yet much still remains to be said of it. Where is the author who has devoted his power of looking into the human heart, to the task of describing the restless activity, the fond watchfulness, the unwearied industry of a proud, poor, tender mother, when labouring to dress her daughters for a ball? Who has told of the turnings, the dyings, the ironings, the darnings, that have gone to make misses of ten pounds a year pin-money look as smart as the squanderer of five hundred? Yet such things are: the light of morning never steals into the eyes of mortals to spur them on again to deeds of greatness after nightly rest, without awakening many hundred mothers whose principal business in life is to stitch, flounce, pucker, and embroider for their daughters! All this is very beautiful!— I speak not of the stitching, flouncing, puckering, and embroidering, but of the devotion of the maternal hearts dedicated to it. All this is very beautiful! yet never has gifted hand been found to bring forth in delicate pencilling traits such as these with half the study that has been often bestowed on the painting a cobweb. This is unjust.

Great, however, as were Mrs. Compton's exertions for the establishment of her daughters by the ways and means above described, her maternal efforts were not confined to these; for their sakes she on one occasion armed herself for an enterprise which, notwithstanding the resolute tone of her character, cost her some struggles. This desperate undertaking, which was nothing less than the penetrating to the rarely-invaded retreat of Miss Betsy, for the purpose of asking her to give the girls a little money, was occasioned by a great event in the annals of Silverton.

The officers of the —— regiment, a detachment of which had been quartered there for a twelvemonth, gallantly determined to give the neighbouring families a fête before they left the town, in return for the hospitalities they had received. I am writing of the year 1813 — a period when the palmy days of country quarters still existed, and many may still remember the tender sensibilities excited by a departing regiment, and the gay hopes generated by an arriving one. Either of these events was well calculated to chase the composure of spirits arising from the unbroken routine of ordinary existence; and it may easily be imagined that, upon an occasion where the effects of both were brought to bear upon the hearts and souls of a set of provincial fair ones at the same moment, the emotions produced must have been of no ordinary nature.

Such was the case at the fête given by the first battalion of the —— regiment on their leaving Silverton; for, as it chanced that they were to be replaced by the second battalion of the same corps, the compliment intended for the neighbourhood was so arranged as to be shared by the officers who were about to be introduced to it; and thus an immense mass of joys and sorrows, regrets and hopes, tears and smiles, all came into action at once; and volumes might be filled in the most interesting manner, solely in describing the states of mind produced in the most charming portion of the inhabitants of twenty-seven of the principal houses of Silverton and its vicinity.

“It was so quite unlike any other party that ever was given,” as Mrs. Compton well observed, in talking over the matter with her daughters, “that it was downright impossible not to make some difference in the way of preparing for it.”

“Different! . . . I believe it is different!” exclaimed Miss Martha: “it is the first ball we ever showed ourselves at by daylight, and I should like to know how we, that always lead every thing, are to present ourselves in broad sunshine with dyed pink muslin and tarnished silver?”

“You can’t and you shan’t,” replied her affectionate mother, “if I sell the silver spoons and buy plated ones instead. . . . I will not have my girls disgraced in the face of two regiments at once. But, upon my life, girls, money is not to be had for the asking; for truth it is, and no lie, that there is not above twenty pounds in the bank to last till Michaelmas, and the

butcher has not been paid these five months. But don't look glum, Martha! . . . Shall I tell you what I have made up my mind to do?"

"Carry a plate round the mess-room, mamma, when they are all assembled, perhaps," replied the lively young lady, "and if you asked for aid for the sake of our bright eyes, it is likely enough you might get something; but if it is not that, what is it, mother?"

"Why, I will walk over to Compton Basett, Martha, and ask the ram's horn, your aunt, for five pounds outright, and tell her into the bargain, what it is for, and, stingy and skinflint as she is, I can't say that I shall be much surprised if she gives it; for she is as proud as she's ugly; and it won't be difficult to make her see, this time, that I am asking more for credit's sake than for pleasure."

"Go, mother, by all means," replied the young lady with a sneer, that seemed to indicate despair of any aid from Miss Betsy. "All I know is, that she never gave me any thing since I was born but a Bible and Prayer-book, and it don't strike me as very likely she'll begin now. Set off, however, by all manner of means, and if you come back empty-handed, I'll tell you what my scheme shall be."

"Tell me now, Martha," said the mother. "It's no joke, I can tell you, striding over the hill this broiling day. I don't want to go for nothing, I promise you. Tell us your scheme, girl, at once."

"Why, if I was you, mother, I would go to Smith's shop, and tell him confidentially that I wanted a little more credit, and that every thing would be sure to be settled at Christmas."

"That won't do, Martha Compton. Your father has given him a bill already for thirty pounds, due in November, and it is a chance if it gets honoured, I promise you. Smith knows too much about our money matters to be caught napping."

"Well then, set off, mother! I'd offer to go with you, only I know that Captain Tate will be sure to be walking on the Hatherton Road, and I shouldn't wonder yet if he was to come out with a proposal."

"Oh! never mind me, child, I can go alone, and that's what you can't do, my dear. . . . You must take Sophy with you, mind that, and don't get talked of just as the new set are coming in."

"Nay, for that matter, Sophy will be as likely to meet Willoughby as I shall be to meet Tate, so there is no fear I should have to go alone."

"Well! . . . take care of yourselves, and don't let the sun get to tan your necks, mind that."

Having given these parting injunctions, Mrs. Compton set forth upon her expedition, the result of which shall be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

A SISTERLY VISIT, AND A CHEERFUL RECEPTION. — THE RETREAT OF A RURAL HEIRESS. — INTERESTING CONVERSATION. — AN UNSATISFACTORY LETTER.

Mrs. COMPTON said no more than the truth, when she declared that it was no joke to walk from Silverton to Compton Bassett in the dog-days. A long shadeless hill was to be mounted, several pastures, beautifully open to the sun, with all their various stiles, were to be conquered, and finally a rough stony lane, that might have crippled the hoof of a jackass, was to be painfully threaded before she could find herself at Miss Betsy's door. Yet all this she undertook, and all this she performed, strengthened by the noble energy of maternal love.

On reaching at length the comfortable, well-conditioned abode of her husband's rural ancestors, she so far suspended her steadfast purpose as to permit herself to drop into a deliciously cool woodbine-covered seat in the porch, and there indulged the greatly-needed luxuries of panting and fanning herself at her ease for a few minutes, before she set to work on the stony heart of the spinster.

Just as she was beginning to think that it was time her rest should end, and her important labour begin, a curly-headed little girl, of some eight or nine years old, came from the house, and very civilly asked her "What she pleased to want?"

"I want to see Miss Betsy . . . can't you go to her, my little girl, and tell her that her sister, Mrs. Compton, is come to pay her a visit?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the child, "there she is, you can see her, if you please to look this way . . . there . . . at the end of the long walk, where you see the bit of grass-plot and the two elm trees. Miss Betsy always sits in her bower in a sunshiny morning watching the bees."

"Well! . . . trot away to tell her Mrs. Compton is coming, and then she wo'n't be surpris'd, you know."

The child did as she was bid, tripping lightly along a well-kept gravel walk which led to the grass-plot, while Mrs. Compton followed with sedate step behind.

How the announcement of her arrival was received by the little spinster she could not judge, though she was at no great distance when it was made; but her messenger having entered beneath the flowery shelter of Miss Betsy's bower, both parties were effectually concealed from her sight, and despite the profound contempt she constantly expressed for the "little fright," she paused at some paces from the entrance, to await the child's return.

The interval was not long; but though her little envoy speedily re-appeared, she brought no message, and silently pointing to the bower, ran back towards the house.

Mrs. Compton looked after her, as if she had rather she would have remained; but she called her courage (of which she had usually a very sufficient stock) to aid her in meeting "the ugly little body's queer ways," and marched forward to the encounter.

A few steps brought her to the front of Miss Betsy's bower, and there she saw the still happy heiress seated on a bench, which, though it might upon occasion hold two persons, had nevertheless very much the comfortable air of an arm-chair, with a last year's new novel on a little table before her (a subscription to a library at Exeter being one of her very few expensive indulgences).

Miss Betsy's dress was always as precisely neat and nice as that of a quaker; and on the present occasion no bonnet concealed the regular plaiting of her snow-white muslin cap, which, closely fitting round her pale but intelligent features, was so peculiarly becoming, that her visiter muttered in her heart, "She can dress herself up, nasty crooked little thing, and we shall soon see if she has generosity enough to make her *niece* look half as smart."

"Good morning to you, sister Betsy," it was thus she began the difficult colloquy that she was come to hold. "You look charming well to-day, with your beautiful cap, and your pretty arbour, and your book, and your arm-chair, and all so very snug and comfortable. . . . Ah, goodness me! nobody knows but those who have tried, what a much finer thing it is to be single than married!"

"Did you come all the way from Silverton, Mrs. Compton, to tell me that?" said the lady of the bower, pointing to a stool that stood at the entrance.

"Why no, sister Betsy, I can't say I did," replied Mrs. Compton, seating herself. "I am come upon an errand not over agreeable, I assure you—neither more nor less than to talk of your poor brother's troubles and difficulties; and what is worst of all, I don't feel over sure that you will care any thing about it."

"And what makes you think that, Mrs. Compton?" said Miss Betsy in a sort of cheerful, clear voice, that certainly did not evince any painful acuteness of sympathy.

"How can I think that you care much about him, or any of us, sister Betsy, since 'tis months and months that you have never come near us? . . . I am sure we often talk of you, and wish you would be a little more sociable."

"That is exceedingly obliging, Mrs. Compton," replied Miss Betsy in the same cheering, happy tone of voice, "and I should be very wrong not to oblige you, if I could fancy that my doing so could be of any real use or service. But to tell you the truth, I suspect that my poor brother likes to have a better dinner when I am at table than when I am not; and if all's true that gossips tell about his butcher's bill, that can be neither right nor convenient; . . . and as for you, Mrs. Compton, and the young ladies, I greatly doubt if my frequent appearance among you would contribute much to your intimacy with the officers."

"You talk very strangely, sister Betsy . . . I am sure I was not thinking of the officers at all, but only of how glad we always were to see you."

"That is very kind, indeed!" replied the provoking spinster in the same happy voice; "and I assure you that I do believe my brother likes to see me very much, and, what is more remarkable still, I have more than once fancied that my *véce* Sophy looked rather pleased when I came in."

"And so did Martha, I am sure, . . . and so did I, sister Betsy; you can't deny that: . . . then why don't you come to see us oftener?"

"For no reason in the world," replied Miss Betsy gaily, "but because I like to stay at home better."

"So much the worse for us, . . . so much the worse for us, sister Betsy. . . . If you had been to see us, you must have found out what I am now come to tell you, and that is, that poor dear Josiah is in very great difficulty indeed; and though we generally, I must say, bear all our hardships remarkably well, yet just at this time it comes upon us with unbearable severity."

"Does it indeed, Mrs. Compton? . . . But you have never yet turned your head to look at my bees; . . . for my part, I can sit and watch them by the hour together, if my book is not too interesting: . . . careful little fellows! It is but just three o'clock" (standing up as she spoke to look out upon a sun-dial that glittered in the middle of the grass-plot), "but just past three, and they are beginning to come home with their work already."

Mrs. Compton felt what the French call *deroutée*, but she recovered herself, and returned to the charge.

"You are a happy woman, sister Betsy," said she, "with nothing to care about but your books and your bees!"

"I am *very* happy, indeed," replied the maiden, in an accent that well befitted the words; "and so are my bees too, for it is beautiful weather, and one can almost see the flowers grow, they come on so finely."

"But I want to talk to you, sister Betsy, about our troubles. . . . You don't know how I slave and fag to make our poor girls look like somebody. . . . No Saturday night ever comes that I do not sit up till past midnight striving to make their things decent for Sunday!"

"Do you indeed, Mrs. Compton? . . . I was told that they wore pink bows in their bonnets last Sunday, and green the Sunday before; . . . but I did not know that you sat up to change them."

"Change them! . . . God bless you! . . . I wish that was all I have got to do. . . . Why, I had to wash those pink ribands, and then dip them in saucer pink, and then rub them *very nearly* dry, till my poor arms almost came off, and then iron them, and then sew in the wire riband again, and the

neighbourhood. Now, just fancy our girls being invited to such a party as this, and not having a dress in the world that they can go in. . . . Just tell me what you think of this, sister Betsy?"

"Not having had much experience in such matters, Mrs. Compton, I really am quite at a loss to guess what it is that young ladies are likely to do in such a case."

"Don't you think it would be very natural, sister Betsy, to turn towards some kind, generous, rich relation, and ask their help out of such a strait? . . . don't you think this would be natural and right, sister Betsy?"

"Yes, very natural and right, indeed, Mrs. Compton."

"Thank God! . . . then all our troubles are at an end! . . . Dear, blessed, sister Betsy! . . . ten pounds, ten pounds will be quite enough for us all, and buy a pair of new black stockings for Josiah into the bargain, in case he should like to go."

Miss Betsy made no reply, but drawing the table a little towards her, opened her book, and began to read.

"It's a long walk I have to go, sister," resumed Mrs. Compton, "and I shall be particularly glad to get home; . . . so, will you have the kindness to give me the money at once?"

"Ma'am?" . . . said Miss Betsy, looking up with a most innocent expression of countenance.

"Whatever sum you may be pleased to grant us, sister Betsy, I beg and entreat you to give me directly."

"So I would, Mrs. Compton, without a moment's delay," replied Miss Betsy, with the most cheerful good-humour, "only I don't intend to give you any money at all."

"Oh! isn't that treachery? . . . isn't that cruelty?" exclaimed the agitated matron, wringing her hands. "Did not you say, sister Betsy, that it would be the most natural and right thing in the world to ask one's rich relations in such a moment as this?"

"But I never said it would be right to ask me, Mrs. Compton."

"But you meant it, if you did not say it, and that I'm sure you can't deny, . . . and isn't it hard-hearted to disappoint me now?"

"It is a great deal more hard-hearted in you, Mrs. Compton, to take upon you to say that I am rich I am a poor crooked

ram's horn of a body, as you know well enough, and I want the comfort and the consolation of all the little countrified indulgences that my good father provided for me by his will. You were a beauty, Mrs. Compton, and your daughters are beauties, and it must be a great blessing to be a beauty; but when God denied me this, he gave me a kind-hearted father, who took care that if I could not have lovers, I should have wherewithal to do tolerably well without them; and I am not going to fly in the face of Providence, or of my father either, in order to dress you and your daughters up to please the officers. So now, Mrs. Compton, I think you had better go home again."

"And is this the way you treat your poor brother's children, Miss Betsy? . . . your own flesh and blood! . . . and they, poor girls, sitting at home in the midst of their faded, worn-out trumpery, and thinking what a disgrace they shall be to the name of Compton in the eyes of all the country, if their aunt Betsy wo'n't come forward to help them!"

"Stop a minute, Mrs. Compton, and I will help them in the best manner I can. But I must go into my own room first, and you may sit here the while."

"Will you give me a draught of milk, sister Betsy?" said the again sanguine visitor, "my mouth is perfectly parched."

The same little girl who had acted as her usher was again within call, and Miss Betsy summoned her by name.

"Go to your mother, Sally, and desire her to spare me a pennyworth of fresh milk; and here, my dear, is the money to pay for it. Don't drop it, Sally."

"Dear me, sister Betsy, I don't want to put you to the expense of a penny for me; . . . I thought that you had milk allowed your in you rent."

"And so I have, as much as I can use. But you are not me, Mrs. Compton; and I make a great point of being just and exact in all ways. . . . And now I will go for what I promised you."

In about ten minutes the little lady returned with something in her hand that looked like a sealed letter.

"Please to give this to my nieces, Mrs. Compton, with my good wishes for their well doing and happiness; and now, if you please, I will wish you good morning, for I am rather tired of talking. Don't open that letter, but give it sealed to our daughters. Good morning, Mrs. Compton."

Miss Betsy then carefully took up the empty cup which her visiter had drained, and returned to the house, leaving her sister-in-law to set off upon her homeward walk in a condition painfully balancing between hope and fear; nevertheless she obeyed the command she had received, and delivered the letter unopened into the hands of her daughter Martha.

That young lady tore it asunder by the vehemence of her haste to obtain information as to what it might contain; but Miss Sophia, who was of a more gentle nature, quietly took the dissevered parts, and having carefully placed them side by side upon the table, read as follows:—

NIECE MARTHA AND NIECE SOPHIA,

“Your mother tells me that you are greatly troubled in your minds as to what dresses you shall appear in at a fête, or entertainment, about to be given by some officers. She tells me that your dresses are all very dirty, therefore I hereby strongly advise you never on any account to put them on again till such time as they shall be made clean; for it is by no means an idle proverb which says, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” Your mother spoke also of some articles which, as she said, it would be necessary for you to put on upon this occasion, all of which you possessed, but in a state greatly faded; which means, as I take it, that they have lost their colour by exposure to the sun; observing (what is indeed very obviously true), that as this fête or entertainment is to be given by daylight, the loss of colour in these articles would, if seen at such a time, become particularly conspicuous. It is therefore her opinion, and it is in some sort mine also, that the wearing such faded apparel would be exposing yourselves to the unpleasant observations of your richer, cleaner, and smarter neighbours. For which reason my opinion is (and I shall be very glad if it prove useful to you), that you avoid such a disagreeable adventure, by staying at home.

“I am, your aunt,

“ELIZABETH COMPTON.

The effect likely to be produced by such a communication as this, upon ladies in the situation of Mrs. Compton and her daughters, must be too easily divined to require any de

scription; but the resolution taken in consequence of it by Miss Martha, being rather more out of the common way, shall be related in a chapter dedicated to the subject.

CHAPTER III.

GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE MOST INTERESTING OF THE SILVERTON LOCALITIES. — A RENCONTRE NOT UNEXPECTED. — A SUCCESSFUL MANŒUVRE.

AFTER uttering a few of those expressions which, by a very remarkable sort of superstition, most nations of the civilised world hold to be a relief under vexation, Miss Martha Compton resumed the bonnet and parasol which she had but recently laid aside, and without consulting either mother or sister, who were occupied in a reperusal of Miss Betsy's epistle, she sallied forth, and deliberately took her way in a direction leading towards the barracks, which were situated close by the turnpike that marked the entrance to the town.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the young lady had any intention of entering within the boundary of that region, whose very name is redolent to all provincial female hearts as much of terror as of joy; she had no such desperate measure in her thoughts. Nor was there need she should; for between the curate's dwelling and the barrack-yard there was a three-cornered open space, planted with lime trees, displaying on one side some of the handsomest shops in the town, among which were the pastry-cook's and the circulating library (both loved resorts of idle men), and beneath the trees a well-trodden, a very well-trodden walk, rarely or never without some lounging red coat to enliven its shade. When it is added, that in this open space the band played morning and evening, all the world will be aware that if not the centre, 't was decidedly the heart of Silvertown, for to and from it the stream of human life was ever flowing, and all its tenderest affections were nourished there.

Being by necessity obliged to pass along this walk, or the *parement* which skirted the road beside it, Miss Martha Compton had no occasion whatever to enter the barrack-yard,

or even to approach its enclosure, in order to ensure meeting, within the space of any given hour before mess-time, any officer she might wish to see.

There was at this particular epoch much of constancy in the feelings of the fair Martha; for though she had parted from Captain Tate only three quarters of an hour before, it was Captain Tate, and Captain Tate only, that she now wished to see. Nor did she long wish in vain. When her tall person, straight ankles, and flashing eyes first entered upon the "High Street Parade," Captain Tate was swallowing the fourth spoonful of a raspberry ice; but, ere she had reached the middle of it, he was by her side.

"Oh! Captain Tate!" she exclaimed, with heightened colour and brightened eyes, "I did not expect to see you again this morning I thought for certain you would be riding with the colonel, or the major, or some of them."

"Ah! Miss Martha! You don't know what it is to be ordered from quarters where you don't know what it is to be torn heart and soul and body asunder, as I shall be in a few days, or you would not fancy one should be riding out of town, as long as one had the power of staying in it!"

"Oh dear! you wo'n't mind it, I'm sure you will like Plymouth quite as well or perhaps better than you do Silverton: we shall all remember you longer than you will remember us."

"Do not say so! do not say so! beautiful Martha!—you cannot think it."

"I'm sure I do," responded the young lady, with a very distinct sigh.

It was exceedingly wrong in Captain Tate (yet all his family and intimate friends declared that he was as worthy a fellow as ever lived)—it was exceedingly wrong in him to offer his arm to Miss Martha the moment he heard this sigh; for in fact he was engaged to be married to his cousin, and the marriage ceremony was only deferred till he should be gazetted as a major; yet he scrupled not, as I have related, to offer his arm, saying in a very soft, and even tender accent,—

"I know it is not the etiquette of dear, quiet little Silverton, for the officers to offer their arms to the young ladies

but just at the last . . . at such a moment as this, not even the Lord Mayor of the town himself could think it wrong."

This reasoning seemed quite satisfactory for Miss Martha's **aria** was immediately placed within his.

"It is very true, as you say, Captain Tate; the last time does make a difference. But it will be very dull work for you going to Smith's shop with me; . . . and I must go there, because mamma has sent me."

"Dull! . . . Oh! Miss Martha, do you *really* think that any place can be dull to me where you are?"

"How do I know, Captain Tate? . . . How can any girl know how much, or how little."

"Good Heaven! . . . we are at the shop already?" said the Captain, interrupting her. . . . "How such dear moments fly!"

Miss Martha answered not with her lips, but had no scruple to let her fine large eyes reply with very intelligible meaning, even though at that very moment she had reached the front of the counter, and that Mr. Smith himself stood before her, begging to know her commands. Her arm, too, still confidently hung upon that of the stylish-looking young officer; and there certainly was both in her attitude and manner something that spoke of an interest and intimacy between them of no common kind.

A few more muttered words were exchanged between them before the draper's necessary question met any attention whatever, yet in general the Miss Comptons were particularly civil to Mr. Smith, and at length, when she turned to answer him, she stopped short before she had well pronounced the words "mull muslin," saying with an air of laughing embarrassment, and withdrawing her arm, —

"Upon my word and honour, you must go, Captain Tate . . . I can no more buy any thing while you stand talking to me than I can fly."

"Did not you promise me?" said the Captain reproachfully, and not knowing what in the world to do with himself till it was time to dress.

"Yes, I know I did," she replied, "but the truth is," . . . and she pressed both her hands upon her heart, and shook her *head* . . . "the thing is impossible . . . You must leave me, *indeed!* . . . we shall meet to-night at the Major's, you

know . . . farewell ! ” . . . and she stretched out her hand to him with a smile full of tender meaning.

The Captain looked rather puzzled, but fervently pressed her hand, and saying “ *Au revoir* then ! ” left the shop. The young lady looked after him for a moment, and then, turning to Mr. Smith with a look, a sigh, and a smile not at all likely to be misunderstood, said,—

“ I suppose, Mr. Smith, you have heard the news about me ? . . . There never was such a place for gossip as Silvertown.”

Mr. Smith smilingly protested he had heard nothing whatever about her, but added, with very satisfactory significance, that he rather thought he could guess what the news was, and begged very respectfully to wish her joy of it.

“ You are very kind, Mr. Smith ; I am sure it is the last thing I expected . . . so much above me in every way . . . And now, Mr. Smith, I want to speak to you about the things that must be bought. I am sure you are too neighbourly and too kind to put difficulties in my way. It is a very different thing now, you know, as to what I buy ; and I am sure you will let me have quite on my own account, and nothing at all to do with papa, a few things that I want very much at the present moment.”

Miss Martha looked so handsome, and the whole affair seemed so clear and satisfactory, that Mr. Smith, careful tradesman as he was, could not resist her appeal, and declared he should be happy to serve her with whatever articles she might choose to purchase.

Her dark eyes sparkled with the triumph of success ; she had often felt her own powers of management swelling within her bosom when she witnessed the helpless dependency of her father, or listened to the profitless grumbling of her mother, upon every new pecuniary pressure that beset them ; and it is not wonderful if she now believed more firmly than ever, that much suffering and embarrassment might very often be spared, or greatly alleviated, by the judicious exercise of such powers as she felt conscious of possessing.

As a proof that her judgment was in some measure commensurate with her skill, she determined not to abuse the present opportunity by contracting a debt which it would be quite impossible for her father to pay ; so, notwithstanding

the tempting finery with which the confiding Mr. Smith spread the counter, she restrained her purchases to such articles as it might really have endangered all their schemes of future conquest to have been without, and then took her leave, amidst blushes and smiles, and with many assurances to the gently-faceticious shopkeeper, that let her be where she would, she should never forget his obliging civility.

It was a moment of great triumph for Martha when Mr. Smith's man arrived, and the huge and carefully packed parcel was brought up to the chamber where Mrs. Compton and her daughters sat at work.

"What in the world is this?" exclaimed the mother, seizing upon it. "Is it possible that her letter was only a joke, and that the little fright has actually sent you some dresses at last?"

"It is much more likely, I fancy, that I have coaxed Mr. Smith into giving us a little more credit. It can all be paid off by a little and a little at a time, you know; and at any rate, here are some very pretty dresses for the fête, besides about three pounds' worth of things that we really could not do without any longer."

"And do you really mean, Martha, that you have got Smith to send in all these beautiful things on credit?"

"I do, indeed, mamma."

"Was there ever such a girl! . . . Only look, Sophy, at this lovely muslin! Why, it will wash, and make up again with different trimmings as good as new for a dozen regiments to come! . . . Oh, you dear clever creature, what a treasure you are! . . . I wish to God I had trusted all to you from the first, and not tired myself to death by walking over to that stingy little monster . . . but, tired or not, we must cut these dear sweet dresses out at once. Nancy Baker must come in and make the bodies, and we must set to, girls, and run the seams, . . . and a pleasure it will be too, God knows! . . . I have worked at turning and twisting old gowns into new ones till I have hated the sight of an ironing box and a needle; but this is another guess sort of a business, and I shall set about it with a right good will, I promise you."

And so she did, and the dresses went on prosperously, as well as every thing else connected with the officers' fête; and when the wished-for, but dreaded day arrived, in which so

many farewell sighs were to be sighed, and so many last looks looked, and so many scrutinising glances given, as to what might be hoped for from the flirtations of the ensuing year, the sun shone so brightly as evidently to take part with the new-comers, permitting not one single cloud to sympathise with those who were about to depart.

Of all the beauties assembled at this hybrid festival, none appeared to greater advantage than the Misses Compton. Their dresses were neither dirty nor faded, but exceedingly well calculated to set off their charms as favourably as their mother herself could have desired. Captain Tate, after dancing his last dance with Martha, pointed her out, with some feeling of triumph, to one of the new arrivals as the girl upon whom he had bestowed the largest share of his regimental gallantries; but he was far from imagining, as he did so, how very much better she had contrived to manage the flirtation than himself. She had made it the means of clothing herself and sister from top to toe, while to him it had been very costly in gloves, ices, eau de Cologne and dancing-pumps.

CHAPTER IV.

A WEDDING, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. — A TRANSFER OF PROPERTY. — MISS MARTHA RECEIVES A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE. — ANOTHER EXPEDITION TO COMPTON BASKET.

THE regimental gala which had been looked forward to with so much interest, though very gay and very agreeable, did not perhaps produce all the results expected by the soft hearts and bright eyes of Silvertown, for only one wedding was achieved in consequence of it. This one made a very hasty and imprudent bride of Sophia Compton. Her charming voice, joined to her pretty person, was too enchanting for the enthusiastic Lieutenant Willoughby to leave behind him; and just as the full moon rose upon the tents of the revellers, he drew her gently into the deep shadow of that appropriated to the sutlers, and there swore a very solemn oath that it was quite impossible he should continue to exist, if she refused to elope with him that evening.

Upon the whole, Miss Sophia was by no means sorry to

hear this, but could not help expressing a modest wish that he would be so obliging as to change the plan of operations, and instead of eloping with her, would just speak to papa, and so be married in a proper way.

For a considerable time, longer indeed than it was possible to remain in the shadow of the sutler's tent, the young gentleman declared this to be impossible; because, in that case, his own relations must be informed of the affair, and he knew perfectly well that if this happened, effectual measures would be taken to prevent his ever possessing his adorable Sophia at all. These arguments were repeated, and dwelt upon with very convincing energy, for the space of one whole quadrille, during which the tender pair sat ensconced behind a fanciful erection, on the front of which was traced, in letters formed of laurel leaves, the words, "TO THE LADIES." Nor was his pretty listener insensible to their force, or the probable truth of the "*misery*" they predicted; it was, therefore, all things considered, much to the credit of Miss Sophy that she persevered in her refusal of accepting him on the terms he offered.

Lieutenant Willoughby was by no means a wicked young man, but it was his nature to covet particularly whatever it was least convenient to obtain; and it was, I believe, of him that a youthful anecdote has been recorded which sets this disposition in a striking point of view. Upon occasion of some dainty, but pernicious delicacy, being forbidden, or some frolic tending too strongly to mischief being stopped, he is said to have exclaimed, "It is a very, *very* shocking thing, mamma, that every thing that is nice is called wrong, and every thing that is nasty is called right." This was said when he was seven years old, but at twenty-two he was very nearly of the same unfortunate opinion, and invariably valued every thing in proportion to the conviction he felt that he should be opposed in his pursuit of it.

When, therefore, Miss Sophia persisted in her declaration that she would not run away with him, Lieutenant Willoughby became perfectly desperate in his determination to obtain her; and having a sort of natural instinct which convinced him that no proposal of marriage would be ill received by Mrs. Compton, he wrung the hand of his Sophy, implored her not to dance *with any body else*, and then having sought and found her *mother amidst the groups of matrons who sat apart admiring*

their respective daughters, he drew her aside, and told his tale of love.

This, as he expected, was by no means unkindly received ; and when Mrs. Compton, having recovered from her first ecstasy, began to hint at income and settlement, the impassioned young gentleman contrived to puzzle her so completely, by stating the certainty of his being disinherited if his marriage were immediately known, and the handsome fortune it was possible he might have if it were kept profoundly secret, that he sent her home as vehemently determined to let him marry her daughter, without saying a word to his family about the matter, as he could possibly have desired.

The result of this may be easily divined. Nothing approved by Mrs. Compton was ever effectually opposed by Mr. Compton ; so Miss Sophia was married to Lieutenant Willoughby within ten days of the regimental ball, and within one year afterwards a female infant, called Agnes Willoughby, was placed in the care of the curate of Silverton and his wife ; her young mother being dead, and her broken-spirited father about to set off for the West Indies, having found his father implacable, his well-married sisters indignant, and nothing left him whereon to found a hope of escape from his difficulties except thus giving up his little girl to her grandfather, and exchanging his commission in the gay — regiment for one in a corps about to embark for a service very likely to settle all his embarrassments by consigning him to an early tomb.

Meanwhile the curate of Silverton was becoming every day more involved in debt ; and his dashing eldest daughter, though handsomer than ever, painfully conscious that among all the successive legions of lovers whose conspicuous adorations had made her the most envied of her sex, there was not one who offered any rational probability of becoming her husband.

The first of these misfortunes was the most embarrassing, and so imperiously demanded a remedy, that the poor curate at length consented to find it in the sale of his moiety of his paternal acres. It is certain that his nightly potations of hot toddy had very considerably impaired his powers of caring for any thing ; nevertheless, it was not without a pang that he permitted his wife to insert an advertisement in the county *paper*, proclaiming the sale by auction of certain crofts and meadows, barns and byres, making part and parcel of a capital dairy-farm, known by the name of Compton Basett.

When the day of sale arrived, several competitors appeared who bid pretty briskly for the lot; for the land, particularly thirty acres of it, known by the name of "the butcher's close," was some of the best in the county; but the successful candidate, who, it was pretty evident from the first, was determined that it should be knocked down to no one else, was farmer Wright, Miss Betsy's prosperous and well-deserving tenant. This, though the purchase was a large one for a mere farmer (amounting to six thousand five hundred and twenty-five pounds), did not greatly surprise the neighbourhood, for the Wrights were known to be a prudent, thrifty, and industrious race. It is possible they might have been more surprised had they known that it was Miss Betsy herself, and not her tenant, who was the purchaser. But so it was. The twenty-five years which had elapsed since the death of her father had enabled this careful little lady to accumulate, by means of her rent, her five hundred pounds and its compound interest, and the profits of her well-managed apiary, a much larger sum than it required to become the possessor of her brother's share of Compton Basett; and when she had finished the affair, and leased out the whole property (the butcher's close included) to her friend and tenant farmer Wright, for the annual rent of six hundred pounds (now including two chickens per week for her own use), she still remained possessed of four thousand pounds sterling, safely lodged in the funds; a property which went on very rapidly increasing, as her scale of expense never varied, and rarely exceeded ten pounds per annum beyond the profits of her bees, and her stipulated accommodation from the farm. But, in spite of this strict economy, Miss Betsy was no bad neighbour to the poor, and in a small and very quiet way did more towards keeping dirt and cold out of their dwellings, than many who spent three times as much upon them, and made ten times as much fuss about it.

It was not, however, till many years later, that the fact of her being the possessor of the whole of the Compton Basett estate, became known to any one but farmer Wright; and as to the amount of her half-yearly increasing property in the funds, she had no confidant but her broker. This mystery, *this profound secrecy, in the silent rolling up of her wealth, was perhaps the principal source of her enjoyment from it.*

It amused her infinitely to observe, that while the bad management and improvidence of her brother and his wife were the theme of eternal gossipings, her own thrift seemed permitted to go quietly on, without eliciting any observation at all. Her judicious and regularly administered little charities assisted in producing this desired effect, much more than she had the least idea of; for the praises of Miss Betsy's goodness and kindness proceeded from many who had profited more from her judgment, and her well-timed friendly loans, than from her donations; and the gratitude for such services was much more freely and generally expressed, than if the favours conferred had been merely those of ordinary almsgiving. It was therefore very generally reported in Silverton that Miss Betsy Compton gave away all her income in charity, which was the reason why she never did any thing to help her embarrassed relations. These erroneous reports were productive of at least one advantage to the family of the curate of Silverton, for it effectually prevented their having any expectations from her beyond a vague and uncertain hope, that if she did not bequeath her farm-house and acres to an hospital, the property might be left to them. But not even the croaking ill-will of Mrs. Compton could now anticipate a very early date for this possible bequest; for, pale and delicate-looking as she ever continued, nobody had ever heard of Miss Betsy's having a doctor's bill to pay; and as she was just seven years younger than her brother the curate, who, moreover, was thought to be dropsical, there appeared woefully little chance that her death would ever benefit her disappointed sister-in-law at all. A very considerable portion of the purchase-money of the estate had dwindled away . . . the little Agnes Willoughby had attained the age of eleven years, and Mr. Compton had become so ill as to have been forced to resign his curacy, when Mr. Barnaby, the celebrated surgeon and apothecary of Silverton, who for the last ten years had admired Miss Martha Compton more than any lady he had ever looked upon, suddenly took courage and asked her point-blank to become his wife.

Had he done this some few years before, his fate would have been told in the brief monosyllable *no*, uttered probably with as much indignation as any sound compounded of two letters could express; but since that time the fair Martha had

any colonels, majors, captains, . . . ay, and lieutenant-march into the town, and then march out again, inspering any thing more profitable in her ear than the promise of her being an angel, that the case was greatly altered after the meditation of a moment, she answered modestly, . . . "You must speak to my mother, Mr. Compton."

Greatly satisfied by the reply, Mr. Barnaby did speak to her ; but the young lady took care to speak to her first, and in a long and very confidential conversation, it was decided between them that the offer of the gentleman should be accepted, that fifty pounds out of the few remaining hundred should be spent upon her wedding-garments, and that ever it pleased God to take poor Mr. Compton, his widow and little grand-daughter should be received into Mr. Barnaby's

family.

It has not been recorded with any degree of certainty, whether these last arrangements were mentioned to the enamoured Galen, when the important interview which decided the fate of Miss Martha took place ; but whether they were or not, the marriage ceremony followed with as little delay as possible.

Two circumstances occurred previous to the ceremony which were to be mentioned, as being calculated to open the character of our heroine to the reader. No sooner was this important matter decided upon, than Miss Martha told her mamma, that as her intention to walk over to Compton Bassett, and introduce Miss Betsy of the news herself.

And what do you expect to get by that, Martha ?" said the old lady. "I have not forgot yet *my* walk to Compton Bassett just before poor dear Sophy's marriage, nor the trick the monster played me, making me bring home her vile critical letter as carefully as if it had been a bank-note for a hundred pounds. . . . You must go without me, if go you will for I have taken my last walk to Compton Bassett, I promise you."

"I don't want you to trouble yourself about it in any way, mamma," replied Miss Martha. "I'll make Agnes walk with me, and whether I get any thing out of the little porcupine or not, she walk can do us no great harm."

"It is not so hot as when I went that's certain," said Mrs.

mpton, becoming better reconciled to the expedition. "She never seen Agnes since the poor little thing was thought to be dying in the measles, just five years ago; and then, you know, she did hire a nurse, and send in oranges and jellies, and all that sort of trumpery; . . . and who can say but her heart may soften towards her again, when she sees what a sweet pretty creature she is grown?"

"I can't say I have much faith in good looks doing much towards drawing her purse-strings. She has seen poor Sophy and me often enough, and I can't say that we ever found our beauty did us any good with her, neither is it that upon which I reckon now. But telling her of a wedding is not begging, you know, . . . and I don't think it impossible but what such a prudent, business-like wedding as mine, may be more to her taste than poor Sophy's, where there was nothing but a few fine-sounding names to look to . . . and much good they did her, poor thing!"

"Well, set off, Martha, whenever you like. There is no need to make little Agnes look smart, even if I had the means to do it, for it's quite as well that she should be reminded of the wants of the poor child by the desolate condition of her old straw-bonnet . . . When do you think you shall go?"

"This afternoon; I'm sure of not seeing Barnaby again till tea-time, for he has got to go as far as Pemberton, so we may start as soon as dinner is over."

Miss Martha Compton and her young companion set off accordingly about three o'clock, and pursued their way, chiefly in silence, to Miss Betsy's abode; for Agnes rarely spoke to her aunt, except when she was spoken to, and Miss Martha was meditating profoundly the whole way upon the probability of obtaining Mr. Barnaby's consent to the re-furnishing his drawing-room. It was the month of April, the air deliciously sweet and mild, and birds singing on every tree; so that although the leaves were not yet fully out, they found Miss Betsy sitting as usual in her bower, and enjoying as keenly the busy hum about her bee-hives, as ever Miss Martha did the bustling animation produced by the murmuring of a dozen red-coats.

Miss Betsy was at this time about fifty years of age, and though the defect in her shape was certainly not lessened by age, she was altogether an exceedingly nice-looking little old

lady; and her cap was as neat and becoming, and her complexion very nearly as delicate, as at the time of Mrs. Comp-ton's visit just twelve years before.

She fixed her eyes for a moment upon Martha as she approached the bower, but appeared not to know her; the little girl following close behind, was for a minute or two invisible; but the instant she caught sight of her, she rose from her seat, and stepping quickly forward, took the child by her hand, drew her in, and placed her on the bench by her side.

Little Agnes, who knew she was come to see her aunt, felt assured by this notice that she was in her presence, and, moreover, that she was a very kind person; so, when the old lady, after examining her features very attentively, said, "You are little Agnes, are you not?" she replied without hesitation or timidity, "Yes, I am; and you are good aunt Betsy, that used to give me the oranges."

"Do you remember that, my child? . . . 'tis a long while, almost half your little life. Take off your bonnet, Agnes, and let me see your face."

Agnes obeyed, the "desolate" straw bonnet was laid aside, and Miss Betsy gazed upon one of the fairest and most delicate little faces that the soft beams of an April sun ever fell upon.

The pale recluse kept her keen eyes fixed upon the little girl for many minutes without pronouncing a word; at length she said, but apparently speaking only to herself, —

"It is just such a face as I wanted her to have . . . Her father was a gentleman . . . She will never have red cheeks, that is quite certain."

"How d'ye do, aunt Betsy?" . . . said Miss Martha, in a very clear and distinct voice; probably thinking that she had remained long enough in the background.

"Very well, I thank you," was the reply; "and who are you?"

"Dear me, aunt, you must say that; for fun, . . . for it is hardly likely you should know Agnes, that was almost a baby the last time you ever saw her, and forget me, that was quite grown up at that same time."

"Oh! . . . then you are Miss Martha, the great beauty, are you? You look very old indeed, Miss Martha, considering that you can't be very much past thirty, and that I suppose

is the reason I did not know you. How is your poor father, Miss Martha?"

"He's very bad, aunt Betsy; but I hope the news I am come to tell you will be a comfort to him, and please you too."

"And what news can that be, Miss Martha?"

"I am going to be married, 'aunt Betsy, to a person that is extremely well off, and able to set me above all poverty and difficulties for ever; . . . and the only thing against it is, that papa cannot afford to give me any money at all for my wedding clothes, which is a dreadful disgrace to the name of Compton; and to tell you the truth at once, for I am a frank, honest-hearted girl, that never hides any thing, I am come over here on purpose to ask you to give me a few pounds, just to prevent my having to ask my husband for a shift."

"If you have no shift, Miss Martha, while you are wearing such a gay bonnet as that, I think any man must be a great fool for taking you. However, that is his affair, and not mine. I cannot afford to buy your wedding-clothes, Miss Martha; nor do I intend ever to give you any money at all for any purpose whatever, either now, or at any future period; so, if you are wise, as well as frank, you will never ask me again. If you marry a *gentleman*, and have children who shall behave according to my notions of honour, honesty, and propriety, it is possible that the little I may leave will be divided among them, and any others whom I may think have an equal claim upon me. But I heartily hope you will have none, for I feel certain I should not like them; and I would rather that the poor little trifle I may have left when I die, should go to some one I did like."

Miss Martha's heart swelled with rage, yet, remote as Miss Betsy's contingent benefits were likely to be, they had still influence sufficient to prevent her breaking out into open violence, and she sat silent, though with burning cheeks and a beating heart. The address she had just listened to was certainly not of the most agreeable style and tone, but it may be some apology for Miss Betsy's severity to state, that the scene which had taken place in Mr. Smith's shop, rather more than twelve years before, in which a certain Captain Tate took an important, though unconscious, part, was accurately well-known to the little spinster, Mrs. Wright (the wife of her tenant) having witnessed the whole of it.

When she had finished her speech to Miss Martha, which was spoken in her usual gay tone of voice, Miss Betsy turned again towards Agnes, who was then standing at the entrance of the bower, earnestly watching the bees.

"They are pretty, curious creatures, are they not, Agnes?" said she. "I hope some day or other you will be as active and industrious. Do you love to work, my little girl."

"I love to play better," replied Agnes.

"Ay . . . that's because you are such a young thing. And who are your playfellows, Agnes?"

"I have not got any playfellows but myself," was the reply.

"And where do you play?" — "In grandpapa's garden behind the house."

"And what do you play at?" — "Oh! so many things. I play at making flower-beds in the summer, and at snow-balls in the winter; and I know a blackbird, and ever so many robin-redbreasts, and they know me, and I . . ."

"Do you know how to read, Agnes?" — "A little," . . . replied the child, blushing deeply.

"Come here, then, and read a page of my book to me."

Poor Agnes obeyed the summons, and submissively placing herself by the side of her aunt, took the book in her hands and began to read. But it was so very lame and imperfect a performance, that Miss Betsy wanted either the cruelty or the patience to let it proceed; and taking the volume away, she said, in a graver tone than was usual with her, "Nobody seems to have given themselves much trouble about teaching you, my little girl; . . . but I dare say you will read better by and by . . . Are you hungry, Agnes? . . . do you wish for something to eat after your walk?"

Delighted at being thus relieved from exposing her ignorance, the little girl replied gaily, —

"I am very hungry indeed, ma'am."

"Then sit here to rest for a few minutes, and I will see what I can get for you:" and so saying, Miss Betsy rose, and walked briskly away towards the house.

"Old brute!" . . . exclaimed Miss Martha, as soon as she was quite beyond hearing. . . . "There's a hump for you! . . . Isn't she a beauty, Agnes?"

"A beauty, aunt Martha? . . . No, I don't think she is a beauty, though I like the look of her face too; . . . but she cer-

tainly is not a beauty, for she is not the least bit like you, and you are a beauty, you know."

"And who told you that, child?"

"Oh! I have heard grandmamma and you talk about it very often; . . . and I heard Mr. Barnaby say, when he came in yesterday, 'How are you, my beauty?' . . . and besides I see you are a beauty myself."

"And pray, Agnes," replied her aunt, laughing with great good-humour, "how do you know a beauty when you see one?"

"Why, don't I see every time I walk by Mr. Gibbs's shop, his beauties in the window, with their rosy cheeks, and their black eyes, and their quantity of fine ringlets? and you are exactly the very image of one of Mr. Gibbs's beauties, aunt Martha."

Miss Martha remembered that there *was* one very pretty face in the window of the village perruquier, and doubted not that the little Agnes's observation had reference to that one; it was therefore with one of her most amiable smiles that she replied, —

"You little goose! . . . how can I be like a painted wax image?"

But the protestations and exclamations by which the simile might have been proved good, were broken off by the approach of a maid-servant from the house, who said that Miss Betsy was waiting for them.

They found the neat little lady in her pretty sitting-room, with a lily-white cloth spread on a table near the open window, and a home-made loaf, a little bowl of native cream, and a decanter of bright spring water, with a couple of tumblers near it.

Simple as this repast was, it was well relished by both the nieces, though decidedly served in honour of only one. However, no positive objection being made to Miss Martha's taking her share of it, she spared neither the loaf nor the cream; and remembering her mother's account of her penny repast, felt something like triumph as she ate, to think how much more she had contrived to get out of her churlish relative.

But this was all she got . . . excepting, indeed, that she felt some consolation for her disappointment in having to tell her *mother, on her return, that if she had children, (and of course*

she should, as every body else had,) they were to have their share of all the old maid might leave.

"Ugly old hypocrite! it won't be much, take my word for it," replied Mrs. Compton. "She likes all the beggars in the parish a vast deal better than she does her own flesh and blood. Don't talk any more of her, Martha . . . I should be glad if it was never to hear her name mentioned again!"

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT FROM THE HEIRESS. — MISS AGNES WILLOUGHBY IS SENT TO SCHOOL.

IN about a month after this visit, and less than a week before the day fixed upon for the happiness of Mr. Barnaby, Miss Betsy Compton very unexpectedly made a visit to her brother. She found him a good deal altered, but she found him also with his toddy and pipe, both objects of such hatred and disgust to her anchoritish spirit, that all the kind feelings which might have been awakened by his failing health were choked by looking upon what caused it.

To see her feeble-minded brother was not, however, the only or the principal object of her visit to Silverton; and she permitted not many minutes to be wasted in mutual questionings that meant very little, before she let him understand what was.

"I am come to speak to you, brother," she said, "about little Agnes. I should like to know in what manner you intend to educate her?"

"Mrs. Compton manages all that, sister Betsy," replied the invalid; "and, at any rate, I am sure I have no money to teach her any thing."

"But it is a sin, brother, to let the child run wild about the garden as you would a magpie. . . . Do you know that she can't read?"

"No, sister Betsy, I know nothing at all about it, I tell you. . . . How can I help it? Am I in a condition to teach any body to read?"

"There are others more to blame than you are, brother, na-

doubt; but let it be who's fault it will, it must not go on so. I suppose you will make no objection to my sending her to school?"

"Oh dear; no! not I; but you had better ask Mrs. Compton about it."

"Very well. . . . But I have your consent, have I not?"

"Dear me, yes; sister Betsy. . . . Why do you tease me so, making me take the pipe out of my mouth every minute?"

Miss Betsy left the little smoke-dried back parlour appropriated to the master of the house, and made her way to the front room up stairs called the drawing-room, which had been reserved, since time out of mind, for the use of the ladies of the family and their visitors. There she found, as she expected, Mrs. Compton and her daughter amidst an ocean of needle-work, all having reference, more or less, to the ceremony which was to be performed on the following Thursday.

"So, Mrs. Compton," was her salutation to the old lady, and a nod of the head to the young one. "I have been speaking to my brother," continued Miss Betsy, "concerning the education of little Agnes; and he has given his consent to my putting her to school."

"His consent!" exclaimed Mrs. Compton; "and, pray, is she not my grandchild too? I think I have as good a right to take care of the child as he has."

"She has a right," replied the spinster, "to expect from both of you a great deal more care than she has found; and were I you, Mrs. Compton; I would take some trouble to conceal from all my friends and acquaintance the fact that, at eleven years of age, my grandchild was unable to read."

"And that's a fact that I can have no need to hide, Miss Betsy; for it's no fact at all—I've seen Martha teaching her scores of times."

"Then have her in, Mrs. Compton; and let us make the trial. If I have said what is not true, I will beg your pardon."

"Lor, mamma!" said Miss Martha, colouring a little, "what good is there in contradicting aunt Betsy, if she wants to send Agnes to school? I am sure it is the best thing that can be done for her; now I am going to be married. . . . And Mr. Barnaby asked me the other day, if you did not mean to send her to school."

"I don't want to keep her from school, God knows, poor little thing, or from any thing else that could do her good. . . . Only Miss Betsy speaks so sharp. . . . But I can assure you, sister, we should have put her to the best of schools long and long ago, only that, Heaven knows, we had not the means to do it; and thankful shall I be if you are come at last to think that there may be as much charity in helping your own blood relations, as in giving away your substance to strangers and beggars."

"You are right, Mrs. Compton, as far as relates to sending Agnes to school . . . that will certainly be a charity. When can the child be got ready?"

"As soon as ever you shall be pleased to give us the means, sister Betsy."

"Do you mean, Mrs. Compton, that she has not got clothes to go in?"

"I do indeed, sister Betsy."

"Let me see what she *has* got, and then I shall know what she wants."

"That is easily told, aunt, without your troubling yourself to look over a few ragged frocks and the like. She wants just every thing, aunt Betsey," said the bride expectant, brave in anticipated independence, and rather inclined to plague the old lady by drawing as largely as might be on her reluctant funds, now they were opened, even though the profit would not be her own.

"If she really does want every thing, Martha Compton, while you are dressed as you now are, very cruel injustice has been done her," replied the aunt. "Your sister had no portion given her, either of the patrimony of her father, or the thousand pounds brought by her mother; and as her marriage with a man who had not a sixpence was permitted, this child of hers has an equal right with yourself to share in the property of your parents."

"The property of their parents! . . . Why, bless me, Betsy Compton, how you do talk! . . . as if you did not know that all the property they ever had is as good as gone. Has not farmer Wright got the estate? And has not the *butcher*, and the baker, and the shoemaker, and all the rest of *them*, got what it sold for, as well as my thousand pounds *among them*, long ago?"

"Then you are now on the very verge of ruin, Mrs. Compton?" said the spinster gravely.

"Yes, sister Betsy, we are," replied the matron reproachfully. "And I can't but say," she continued, "that a lone woman like you, without any expenses whatever but your own meat and drink, which every body says is next to nothing, — I can't but say that you might have helped us a little before now, and no harm done."

"That is your opinion of the case, Mrs. Compton: mine is wholly different. I think harm is done whenever power of any kind is exerted in vain. I have no power to help you. . . . Were all I have poured out upon you, while I lodged myself in the parish workhouse, my conviction is, that I should only be enabling you to commit more follies, and, in my judgment, more sins."

"Well, well, Miss Betsy, it is of no use talking to you — I know that of old; and to tell you the truth, when I do come to beggary, I had rather beg of any body else than of you. I hear far and near of your charity to others, but I can't say that I ever saw any great symptom of it myself."

"Let me see what clothes little Agnes has got, Mrs. Compton, if you please. Our time will be more profitably employed in seeing what I may be able to do for her, than in discoursing of what I am not able to do for you. Miss Martha then, I suppose, may be able to bring her things in."

"Why, as far as the quantity goes, they won't be very difficult to carry. But I don't see much use in overhauling all the poor child's trumpery . . . unless it is just to make you laugh at our poverty, ma'am."

The spinster answered this with a look which showed plainly enough that, however little beauty her pale face could boast, it was by no means deficient in expression. Miss Martha hastened out of the room to do her errand without saying another word.

I will not give the catalogue of poor Agnes's wardrobe, but only observe that it was considerably worse than Miss Betsy expected; she made, however, no observation upon it; but having examined it apparently with very little attention, she took leave of the mother and daughter, saying she would call again in a day or two, and took with her (no permission asked) a greatly faded, but recently fitted frock, which at

duction mother and daughter remonstrated against, loudly declaring it was her best dress, except the old white muslin worked with coloured worsteds, and that she would have nothing upon earth to wear.

"It shall not be kept long," was the reply; and the little lady departed, enduring for a moment the atmosphere of her brother's parlour as she passed, in order to tell him, as she thought herself in duty bound to do, that she should get some decent clothes made for the child, and call again as soon as they were ready to take her to school.

The poor gentleman seemed greatly pleased at this, and said, "Thank you, Betsy," with more animation than he had been heard to impart to any words for many years.

* * * * *

It was just three days after Miss Martha Compton had become Mrs. Barnaby, that the same postchaise drove up to the door that had carried her away from it on an excursion of eight-and-forty hours to Exeter, which the gallant bridegroom had stolen a holyday to give her; but upon this occasion it was hired neither by bride nor bridegroom, but by the little crooked spinster, who was come, according to her promise, to take Agnes to school.

Mrs. Compton was just setting out to pay her first morning visit to the bride, and therefore submitted to the hasty departure of the little girl with less grumbling than she might have done, if less agreeably engaged.

"You must bid your grandpapa good-by, Agnes," said Miss Betsy, as they passed the door of his parlour, and accordingly they all entered together.

"God bless you, my poor little girl!" said the old man after kissing her forehead, "and keep your aunt Betsy's favour if you can, . . . for I don't think I can do much more to help any body. . . . God bless you, Agnes!"

"Dear me, Mr. Compton! . . . you need not bring tears in the child's eyes by speaking that way. . . . I am sure she has never wanted friends since her poor dear mother died; and there's no like she should either, with such an aunt as Martha, married to such a man as Mr. Barnaby. . . . I suppose she is *not to be kept from her family, sister Betsy*, but that we shall *see her in the holydays*. I am sure I don't know where she is *likely to see things so elegant as at her aunt Barnaby's* . . .

"Such a drawing-room ! . . . and a man in livery, at least a boy. . . . and every thing else conformable. . . . I suppose this is to be her home, Miss Betsy, still ?"

"I am glad you have mentioned this, Mrs. Compton," replied her sister-in-law, "because now, in the presence of my brother, I may explain my intentions at once. Whatever you may think of my little means, either you or your wife, or your daughter, brother Josiah, I am not rich enough in my own opinion to make it prudent for me to saddle myself with the permanent charge of this poor child. Moreover, to do so, I must altogether change the quiet manner of life that I have so long enjoyed, and I am not conscious of being bound by any tie sufficiently strong to make this painful sacrifice a duty. Something I think I ought to do for this child, and I am willing to do it. I conceive that it will be more easily in my power to spare something from my little property to obtain a respectable education for her, than either in your's, brother, or even in that of her newly-married aunt Barnaby; for doubtless it would not be agreeable for her to begin her wedded life by throwing a burden upon her husband. But, on the other hand, it will certainly be much more within the power of her aunt Barnaby to give her a comfortable and advantageous home afterwards, than in mine. I will therefore now take charge of her for five years, during which time she shall be supplied with board, lodging, clothes, and instruction, at my expense; or, in case I should die, at that of my executors. After this period I shall restore her to you, brother, or to her grandmother, if both or either of you shall be alive, or if not, to her aunt Barnaby; and when I die she shall have a share, with such others as I may think have a claim upon me, of the small matter I may leave behind. But this of course must be lessened by the expenses I am now contracting for her."

"And are we never to see her for five years, sister Betsy?" said Mrs. Compton very dolorously.

"To tell you the truth, Mrs. Compton, I think the coming home to you twice a year, for the holidays, could be no advantage to her education, and the expense of such repeated journeyings would be very inconvenient to me. I have therefore arranged with the persons who are to take charge of her that she is to pass the vacations with them. I shall, however, make a point of seeing her myself more than once in the course of

the time, and will undertake that she shall come to Silverton twice during these five years, for a few days each time. . . . And now, I think, there is no more to say ; so come, my little girl, for it is not right to keep the driver and the horses any longer waiting."

The adieus between the parties were now hastily exchanged, little Agnes mounted the postchaise, aunt Betsy followed, and they drove off, though in what direction they were to go, after leaving the Silverton turnpike, no one had ever thought of inquiring.

Poor Mrs. Compton stood for some moments silently gazing after the postchaise, and on re-entering her drawing-room, felt a sensation that greatly resembled desolation from the unwonted stillness that reigned there. She was instantly cheered, however, by recollecting the very agreeable visit she was going to pay ; and only pausing to put on her new wedding bonnet and shawl, set off for Mr. Barnaby's, saying to the maid, whom she passed as she descended, "I should like, Sally, to have seen what sort of things she has got for the poor child."

"If they was as neat and as nice as the little trunk as was strapped on in the front, and that's where they was packed, no doubt, . . . there wouldn't be no need to complain of them," was the reply. And now, leaving Agnes to aunt Betsy and her fate, I must return to the duty I have assigned myself, and follow the fortunes of Mrs. Barnaby.

CHAPTER VI.

WEDDED HAPPINESS. — DEATH OF MRS. COMPTON. — THE EX-CURATE BROUGHT INTO A PEACEFUL HARBOUR. — HE FALLS SICK, AND HIS SISTER AND GRANDCHILD ARE SUMMONED.

THE first five or six months of Mrs. Barnaby's married life were so happy as not only to make her forget all her former disappointments, but almost to persuade her that it was very nearly as good a thing to marry a middle-aged country apothecary, with a good house and a good income, as a beautiful young officer with neither.

Since her adventure with Mr. Smith, the draper, milliner, wercer, and haberdasher of Silverton par excellence, Mrs. Bar-

naby's genius for making bargains had been sadly damped ; not but that she had in some degree saved her credit with that important and much-provoked personage by condescending to wear the willow before his eyes ; she even went so far as to say to him, with a twinkling of lids that passed for having tears in her own, —

“ No young lady was ever so used before, I believe . . . I am sure, Mr. Smith, you saw enough yourself to be certain that I was engaged to Captain Tate, . . . yet the moment he found a girl with a little money he sent back all my letters . . . ! ”

Perhaps Mr. Smith believed the lady . . . perhaps he did not ; but at any rate he gave her no encouragement to recommence operations upon his confiding nature ; on the contrary, he ceased not to send in his little account very constantly once every three months, stedfastly refusing to give credit for any articles, however needful. After the sale of the Compton Bassett property the bill was paid, but no farther accommodation in that quarter ever obtained ; indeed the facility of selling out of the funds a hundred pounds a time as it was wanted, superseded the necessity of pressing for it, and in a little way Miss Martha and Mr. Smith had continued to deal most amiably, but always with a certain degree of mutual shyness.

How delightfully different was the case now ! . . . Mrs. Barnaby had only to send her maid or her man (boy) to the redundant storehouse of Mr. Smith, and all that her heart best loved was sent for her inspection and choice, without the slightest doubt or scruple.

Mr. Barnaby was proud of his wife ; for if not quite as slender and delicate, she really looked very nearly as handsome as ever, a slight *souppçon* of rouge refreshing the brilliancy of her eyes, and concealing the incipient fading of her cheeks ; while the total absence of *mauvaise honte* (an advantage which may be considered as the natural consequence of a twelve years' reign as the belle of a well-officered county town), enabled her to preside at his own supper parties, and fill the place of honour as bride at those of his neighbours, with an easy sprightliness of manner that he felt to be truly fascinating. In short, Mr. Barnaby was excessively fond of his lady, and as he was known to have made much more money than he had spent, as no bill had ever been sent to him without immediate payment following, and as Mrs. Barnaby's nature ex-

panded itself in this enlarged sphere of action, and led her to disburse five times as much as Mr. Barnaby had ever expended without her, all the tradesmen in the town were excessively fond of her too. Wherever she went she was greeted with a smile; and instead of being obliged to stand in every shop, waiting till some one happened to be at leisure to ask her what she wanted to buy, her feathers and her frills were no sooner discovered to be approaching the counter, than as many right arms as were in presence thrust forward a seat towards her, while the well-pleased master himself invariably started forth to receive her commands.

Any bride might have found matter for rejoicing in such a change, but few could have felt it so keenly as Mrs. Barnaby. She was by nature both proud and ambitious, and her personal vanity, though sufficiently strong within her to form rather a conspicuous feature in her character, was, in truth, only a sort of petted imp, that acted as an agent to assist in forwarding the hopes and wishes which her pride and ambition formed.

This pride and ambition, however, were very essentially different from the qualities known by these names among minds of a loftier nature. The ambition, for instance, instead of being "that last infirmity of noble mind" for which Milton seems to plead so feelingly, was, in truth, the first vice of a very mean one. Mrs. Barnaby burned with ambition to find herself in a situation that might authorise her giving herself the airs of a great lady; and her pride would have found all the gratification it sought, could she have been sure that her house and her dress would be daily cited among her acquaintance as more costly than their own.

Mrs. Barnaby had moreover *un esprit intrigant* in the most comprehensive sense of the phrase, for she would far rather have obtained any object she aimed at by means of her own manœuvring, than by any simple concurrence of circumstances whatever; and this was perhaps the reason why, at the first moment the proposals of Mr. Barnaby, whom she had (comparatively speaking) used no tricks to captivate, produced a less pleasurable effect upon her mind, than a similar overture from any one of the innumerable military men whom she had so strenuously laboured to win, would have done. However, she was for this very reason happier than many other *wives*, for, in fact, she became daily more sensible of the

substantial advantages she had obtained ; and, on the whole daily better pleased with her complaisant husband.

As her temper, though quietly and steadily selfish, was neither sour nor violent, this state of connubial happiness might have continued long, had not some untoward accidents occurred to disturb it.

The first of these was the sudden and dangerous illness of Mrs. Compton, which was of a nature to render it perfectly impossible for Mr. and Mrs. Barnaby to continue their delightful little parties at home and abroad. The dying lady ceased not to implore her daughter not to leave her, in accents so piteous, that Mr. Barnaby himself, notwithstanding his tender care for his lady's health, was the first to declare that she must remain with her. This heavy burden, however, did not inconvenience her long, for the seizure terminated in the death of the old lady about a week after its commencement.

But even this, though acknowledged to be "certainly a blessing, and a happy release," could not restore the bride to the triumphant state of existence the illness of her mother had interrupted ; for, in the first place, her deep mourning was by no means becoming to her, and she was perfectly aware of it ; and her white satin, and her silver fringe, would be sure to turn yellow before she could wear them again. Besides, what was worse than all, a young attorney of Silverton married the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, who, of course, was immediately installed in all a bride's honours, to the inexpressible mortification of Mrs. Barnaby.

The annoyance which followed these vexations was, however, far more serious : the resources of poor Mr. Compton were completely exhausted ; he had drawn out his last hundred from the funds, and actually remained possessed of no property whatever, except the nearly expired lease, and the worn-out furniture of the house in which he lived.

Mrs. Barnaby listened to the feeble old man's statement of his desperate position with dismay ; she knew just enough of his affairs to be aware that it was very likely to be true, though, with mistaken tenderness, her mother had always refrained from representing their embarrassments to her daughter as being of the hopeless extent which they really were.

What, then, was to be done? The choice lay between two measures only, both deeply wounding to her pride. In the one case she must leave the old man to be arrested in his bed for the price of the food which for a few months longer perhaps he might still get on credit . . . in the other, she must undergo the humiliation of informing her husband that all the gay external appearances she and her mother had so laboriously presented to the public eye, were in reality but so much cheatery and delusion; and that, if he would not take compassion on her father's destitute condition, the poor old man must either die in the county prison or the parish work-house.

The alternative offered more of doubt than of choice, and it might have been long ere she decided, had she not cleverly recollected that, if she decided upon leaving him to get on as he could for a few weeks longer, she must at last submit to her husband's knowing the real state of the case; she therefore resolutely determined that he should know it at once.

The time she chose to make the disclosure was the hour when men are generally supposed to be in the most amiable frame of mind possible, namely, when hunger, but not appetite, has been satisfied, and digestion not fully begun; that is to say, Mr. Barnaby was enjoying his walnuts and his wine.

"My dear Barnaby!" . . . she began, "I have some very disagreeable intelligence to communicate to you, which has reached me only to-day, and which has distressed me more than I can express."

"Good heaven! . . . What can you mean, my dear love? . . . For God's sake, do not weep, my beautiful Martha, but tell me what it is, and trust to me for consolation."

"And that indeed I must do, dearest Barnaby! . . . for who else have I now to look to? . . . My poor father . . . I had no idea of it till this morning . . . my poor father is . . ."

"Dying, perhaps, my poor love! . . . Alas! Martha dearest, I have long known that his case was perfectly hopeless, and I had hoped that you had been aware of this also; but really, my love, his state of health is such as ought in a great degree to reconcile you to his loss. . . . I am sure he must suffer a great deal at times."

Mrs. Barnaby's first impulse was to reply that what she had to tell was a great deal worse than that; but this would have

been the truth ; and a sort of habitual, or it might indeed be called natural cautiousness, led her always to pause before she uttered any thing that she had no motive for saying, excepting merely that it was true ; and she generally found, upon reconsideration, that there was hardly any thing which might not, according to her tactics, be improved by a *little* dressing up. So, in reply to this affectionate remonstrance from her husband, Mrs. Barnaby answered with a sob, —

“ No, my dear Barnaby ! . . . I have no reason to doubt but that Providence will spare my sole remaining parent for some short time longer, if only to prove to him that his happy daughter has the will as well as the means to supply to him the exemplary wife he has lost ! But, alas ! dear Barnaby, who in this world can we expect to find perfect ? My poor dear mother, in her great anxiety to spare his age and weakness the suffering such intelligence must occasion, most unwisely concealed from him and from me the failure of the merchant in whose hands he had deposited the sum for which he sold his patrimonial estate. . . . His object in selling it was to increase his income, principally indeed for my poor mother’s sake, and now the entire sum is lost to us for ever ! ”

“ God bless me ! . . . This is a sad stroke indeed, my dear ! What is the name of this merchant ? . . . I hope, at least, that we may get some dividend out of him. ”

“ I really do not know his name, but I know that it is a New York merchant, and so I fear there is little or no chance of our ever recovering a penny. ”

“ Why, really, in that case, I will not flatter you with much hope on the subject. And what has the poor old gentleman got to live upon, my dear Martha ? ”

“ Nothing, Barnaby ! . . . absolutely nothing : and unless your tender affection should induce you to permit his spending the little remnant of his days under our roof, I fear a prison will soon inclose him. ”

A violent burst of weeping appeared to follow this avowal ; and Mr. Barnaby, who was really a very kind-hearted man, hastened to console her by declaring that he was heartily glad he had a home to offer him. . . . “ So dry up your tears, my dear girl, and let me see you look gay and happy again, ” said he ; “ and depend upon it, we shall be able to make papa very comfortable here. ”

The disagreeable business was over, and therefore Mrs. Barnaby did look gay and happy again. Moreover, she gave her husband a kiss, and said in a very consolatory accent, "The poor old man need not be in our way much, my dear Barnaby; . . . I have been thinking that the little room behind the laundry may be made very comfortable for him without any expense at all; I shall only just have to . . ."

"No, no, Martha," interrupted the worthy Galen, "there is no need of packing the poor gentleman into that dismal little place. . . . Let him have the room over the dining-room; the south is always the best aspect for the old; and besides, there is a closet that will serve to keep his pipes and tobacco and his phials and his pill-boxes, out of sight."

"You are most ex-cess-ively kind, my dear Barnaby," replied his lady; "but did not you tell me that you meant to offer the Thompsons a bed when the bachelors' ball is given? . . . And I am sure you would not like to put *them* any where but in the south room."

"I did say so, my dear; and I am sure I meant it at the time; but a bed for the ball night is of so little consequence to them, and a warm comfortable room for your father is so important, that, do you know, it would seem to me quite silly to bring the two into comparison."

"Well! . . . I am sure I can't thank you enough, and I will go the first thing to-morrow to tell my father of your kindness."

"I must pass by his house to-night, my dear, in my way to the Kellys', and I will just step in and tell him how we have settled it."

It was impossible even for Mrs. Barnaby to find at the moment any plausible reason for objecting to this good-natured proposal; but, in truth, it was far from agreeable to her. Her poor father was quite ignorant of the elegant turn she had given to the disagreeable fact of his having spent his last shilling, and she was by no means desirous that her kind-hearted husband should enter upon any discussion of his "*misfortunes*" with him. But a moment's reflection sufficed to bring her ready wit into play again; and then she said, in addition to the applause she had already uttered;—"By the by, my dear *Barnaby*; I am not quite sure that I can let you enjoy this pleasure without my sharing it with you. I know it will make *my dear father* so very happy!"

“ Well, then, Martha, put on your bonnet and cloak, and come along ; . . . it will be better you should go too, or I might linger with him too long to explain matters, and I really have no time to lose.”

The kindness thus manifested by the worthy Barnaby was not evanescent ; it led him to see that the money produced by the sale of the little remnant of poor Mr. Compton's property, was immediately disposed of in the payment of such trifling debts as, despite his long waning credit, he had been able to contract ; and for the two years and eight months that he continued struggling with advancing age and increasing disease, his attention to him was unremitting.

During the whole of that time Miss Betsy Compton never saw him. All hope, and indeed all urgent want of assistance from her well-guarded purse having ended, Mrs. Barnaby's anger and hatred towards the spinster, flourished unchecked by any motives of interest ; and Miss Betsy was not a person to present herself uninvited at the house of a rich apothecary, who had the privilege of calling her aunt. She had indeed from time to time taken care to inform herself of the condition of her brother, and finding that he wanted for nothing, but was, on the contrary, very carefully nursed and attended, she settled the matter very easily with her conscience ; and with the exception of the pension, and other little expenses of Agnes, her income, yearly increasing, continued to roll up for no other purpose, as it should seem, than merely to afford her the satisfaction of knowing that she was about ten times as rich as any body (excepting, perhaps, farmer Wright,) believed her to be.

When, however, the last hours of the old man were approaching, he told Mr. Barnaby that he should like to see both his sister and his grandchild ; and ten minutes had not passed after he said so, before an express was galloping towards Compton Bassett with a civil gentleman-like letter from the apothecary to Miss Betsy, informing her of the condition of her brother, and expressing the hospitable wish that she and the little Agnes would be pleased to make his house their home as long as the poor gentleman remained alive.

Miss Betsy had some strong prejudices, but she had strong discernment too ; and few old maids whose personal knowledge

of the world had been as contracted as hers, would have so instantly comprehended the good sense and the good feeling of the author of this short note as she did. Her answer was brief, but not so brief as to prevent the friendly feeling with which she wrote it from being perceptible; and, ere they met this stranger aunt and nephew were exceedingly well disposed to be civil to each other.

Miss Betsy's arrangements were soon made. She wrote to the person to whose care she had intrusted Agnes, desiring her immediately to send her under proper protection to Silvertown; and having done this, she set off in farmer Wright's chaise-cart to pay her first visit to her married niece, and her last to her dying brother.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ELEGANCE OF MRS. BARNABY DISPLAYED. — ITS EFFECT ON HER AUNT BETSY. — INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

AGNES WILLOUGHBY had never been in Silvertown from the day that her aunt Betsy first took her from her grandfather's house. Had Mrs. Compton lived, she would probably have battled for the performance of Miss Betsy's promise, that the little girl should sometimes visit them; but though it is probable Mrs. Barnaby might occasionally have thought of her niece with some degree of interest and curiosity, the feeling was not strong enough to induce her to open a correspondence with Miss Betsy; still it was certainly not without something like pleasure that she found she was again to see her.

Miss Betsy arrived late in the evening of the day on which the summons reached her; and, being shown into Mrs. Barnaby's smart drawing-room, was received with much staidness by that lady, who derived considerable consolation, under the disagreeable necessity of welcoming a person she detested, from the opportunity it afforded her of displaying the enormous increase of wealth and importance that had fallen upon her since they last met.

Poor Miss Betsy really felt sad at the thoughts of the *errand upon which she was come*; nevertheless she could not,

without some difficulty, suppress her inclination to smile at the full-blown dignity of Mrs. Barnaby. Fond as this lady was of parading her grandeur on all occasions, she had never, even among the dear friends whom she most especially desired to inspire with envy, felt so strong an inclination to show off her magnificence as on the present. The covers were removed from the chairs and sofas; the eclipse produced by the dim grey drugget, when stretched across the radiance of the many-coloured carpet, was over; five golden-leaved annuals, the glory of her library, were spread at well-graduated distances upon her round table; her work-box, bright in its rose-coloured lining, her smart embossed letter-case, her chimney ornaments, her picture frames, her foot-stools, all were uncovered, all were studiously shown forth to meet the careless eye of Miss Betsy; while the proud owner of all these very fine things, notwithstanding the gloomy state of her mansion, was herself a walking museum of lace and trinkets. . . . Nor were her manners less superb than her habiliments.

"I am sorry, Miss Compton," she said . . . "I may call you Miss Compton now, as my marriage put an end to the possibility of any confusion. . . . I am sorry that your first introduction to my humble abode should have been made under circumstances so melancholy. Dismal as of necessity every thing must look now, I can assure you that this unpretending little room is the scene of much domestic comfort."

This was unblushingly said, though the cold, stiff-looking apartment was never entered but upon solemn occasions, when the whole house was turned inside out for the reception of company. Miss Betsy, or rather Miss Compton, (as, in compliance with Mrs. Barnaby's hint, we will in future call her,) looked round upon the spotless carpet, and upon all the comfortless precision of the apartment, and replied,—

"If this is your common living room, niece Martha, you are certainly much improved in neatness; and seeing it so prim, it is quite needless to ask if you have any children."

This reply was bitter every way; for, first, it spoke plainly enough the spinster's disbelief in the domestic elegance of her niece; and, secondly, it alluded to her being childless, a subject of very considerable mortification to Mrs. Barnaby.

How far this sort of ambush warfare might have proceeded it is impossible to say, as it would have been difficult to place

together any two people who more cordially disliked each other; but before Mrs. Barnaby had time to seek for words bearing as sharp a sting as those she had received, her husband entered. He waited not for the pompous introduction his wife was preparing, but walking up to his guest addressed her respectfully but mournfully, saying he feared it was necessary to press an early interview with her brother, if she wished that he should be sensible of her kindness in coming to him.

Miss Compton immediately rose, and uttering a short, strong phrase expressive of gratitude for his kindness to the dying man, said she was ready to attend him. She found her brother quite sensible, but very weak, and evidently approaching his last hour; he thanked her for coming to him, warmly expressed his gratitude to Mr. Barnaby, and then murmured something about wishing to see little Agnes before he died.

"She will be here to-morrow, brother," replied Miss Compton, "and in time, I trust, to receive your blessing."

"Thank you, thank you, sister Betsy; . . . but tell me, tell me before you go, . . . have you sold father's poor dear fields as I have done? That is all I have got to be very sorry for. . . . I ought never to have done that, sister Betsy."

Mr. Barnaby had left the room as soon as he had placed Miss Compton in a chair by the sick man's bed, and none but an old woman who acted as his nurse remained in it.

"You may go, nurse, if you please, for a little while; I will watch by my brother," said Miss Compton. The woman obeyed, and they were left alone. The old man followed the nurse with his eyes as she retreated, and when she closed the door said,—

"I am glad we are alone once more, dear sister, for you are the only one I could open my heart to. . . . I don't believe I have been a very wicked man, sister Betsy, though I am afraid I never did much good to any body, nor to myself neither; but the one thing that lies heavy at my heart, is having sold away my poor father's patrimony. . . . I can't help thinking, Betsy, that I see him every now and then at the bottom of my bed, with his old hat, and his spud, and his brown gaiters . . . and . . . I never told any body; . . . but he seems always just going to repeat the last words

he ever said to me, which were spoken just like as I am now speaking to you, Betsy, with his last breath; . . . and he said, 'Josiah, my son, I could not die with a safe conscience if I left my poor weakly Betsy without sufficient to keep her in the same quiet comfort as she has been used to. But it would grieve me, Josiah' . . . 'Oh! how plain I hear his voice at this minute! — 'it would grieve me, Josiah,' he said, 'if I thought the acres would be parted for ever . . . they have been above four hundred years belonging to us from father to son; and once Compton Basett was a name that stood for a thousand acres instead of three hundred;' . . . and then . . . don't be angry, sister Betsy," said the sick man, pressing her hand which he held, "but he said, 'I don't think Betsy very likely to marry; and if she don't, Josiah, why, then, all that is left of Compton Basett will be joined together again for your descendants,' . . . and yet, after this I sold my portion, Betsy, . . . and I do fear his poor spirit is troubled for it — I do indeed . . . and it is that which hangs so heavy upon my mind."

"And if that be all, Josiah, you may close your eyes, and go to join our dear father in peace. He struggled with and conquered his strongest feeling, his just and honourable pride, for my sake; and for his, as well as for the same feeling, which is very strong within my own breast also, I have lived poorly, though not hardly, Josiah, and have added penny to penny till I was able to make Compton Basett as respectable a patrimony as he left it. It was not farmer Wright who bought the land, brother — it was I."

The old man's emotion at hearing this was stronger than any he had shown for many years. He raised his sister's hand to his lips, and kissed it fervently. "Bless you, Betsy! . . . bless you, my own dear sister!" . . . he said in a voice that trembled as much from feeling as from weakness, and for several minutes afterwards he lay perfectly silently and motionless.

Miss Compton watched him with an anxious eye, and not without a flutter at her heart lest she should suddenly find this stillness to be that of death. But it was not so; on the contrary, his voice appeared considerably stronger than it had done since their interview began, when he again spoke, and said —

"I see him now, sister Betsy, as plainly as I see the two posts at the bottom of my bed, and he stands exactly in the middle between them; he has got no hat on, but his smooth white hair is round his face just as it used to be, and he looks so smiling and so happy. . . . Do not think I am frightened at seeing him, Betsy; quite the contrary. . . . I feel so peaceful . . . so very peaceful. . . ."

"Then try to sleep, dear brother!" said Miss Compton, who felt that his pulse fluttered, and, aware that his senses were wandering, feared that the energy with which he spoke might hasten the last hour, and so rob his grandchild of his blessing.

"I will sleep," he replied, more composedly, "as soon as you have told me one thing. Who will have the Compton Basett estate, Betsy, when you are dead?"

"Agnes Willoughby," replied the spinster, solemnly.

"That is right. . . . Now go away, Betsy, . . . it is quite right . . . go away now, and let me sleep."

She watched him for a moment, and seeing his eyes close, and hearing a gentle, regular breathing, that convinced her he was indeed asleep, she crept noiselessly from his bed-side; then having summoned the nurse, and re-established her beside the fire, retired to the solitude of her own room.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOLITARY MEDITATION AND IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS. — AGNES WILLOUGHBY ARRIVES AT SILVERTON. — HER GRANDFATHER GIVES HER HIS BLESSING, AND DIES. — MISS COMPTON MAKES A SUDDEN RETREAT.

WHEN Miss Compton reached her room, she found a tiny morsel of fire just lighted in a tiny grate; and as the season was November, the hour nine P. M., and the candle she carried in her hand not of the brightest description, the scene was altogether gloomy enough. But not even to save herself from something greatly worse, would she at that moment have exchanged its solitude for the society of Mrs. Barnaby, although she had been sure of finding her in the best-lighted room, and seated *beside the brightest fire that ever blazed*. So, wrapping around *her the stout camlet cloak*, by the aid of which she had braved

the severity of many years' wintry walks to church, she sat down in the front of the little fire, and gave herself up to the reflections that crowded upon her mind.

Elizabeth Compton did not believe in the doctrine of ghosts; her mind was of a strong and healthy fibre, which was rarely sufficiently wrought upon by passing events to lose its power of clear perception and unimpassioned judgment; but the scene she had just passed through had considerably shaken her philosophy. Five-and-thirty years had passed since Josiah and Elizabeth shared the paternal roof together. They were then very tender friends, for he was affectionate and sweet-tempered; and she, though nearly seventeen, was as young in appearance, and as much in need of his thoughtful care of her, as if she had been many years younger. But this union was totally and for ever destroyed when Josiah married; from the first hour they met, the two sisters-in-law conceived an aversion for each other, which every succeeding interview appeared to strengthen; and this so effectually separated the brother from the sister, that they had never met again with that peculiar species of sympathy which can only be felt by children of the same parents, till now, that the sister came expressly to see the brother die.

This reunion had softened and had opened both their hearts: Josiah confessed to his dear sister Betsy, that his conscience reproached him for having made away with his patrimony — a fact which he had never hinted to any other human being; and she owned to him that she was secretly possessed of landed property worth above six hundred a year, and also — which was a confidence, if possible, more sacred still — that Agnes Willoughby would inherit it.

It would be hardly doing justice to the good sense of Miss Betsy to state that this rational and proper destination of her property had never been finally decided upon by her till the moment she answered her brother's question on the subject; and still less correctly true would it be to say, that the dying man's delirious fancy respecting the presence of their father was the reason that she answered that appeal in the manner she did; yet still there might be some slight mixture of truth in both. Miss Compton was constantly in the habit of telling herself that she had *not* decided to whom she would leave her property; but it is no less true, that the only person she ever

thought of as within the possibility of becoming her heir, was Agnes. It is certain, also, as I have stated above, that Miss Compton did *not* believe that departed spirits ever revisited the earth; nevertheless, the dying declaration of Josiah, that he saw the figure of his father, did produce a spasm at her heart, which found great relief by her pronouncing the words, "Agnes Willoughby."

And now that she was quietly alone, and perfectly restored to her sober senses, she began to reconsider all that she had spoken, and to pass judgment upon herself for the having yielded in some degree to the weakness of a visionary imagination.

The result, however, of this self-examination was not exactly what she herself expected. At first, she was disposed to exclaim mentally, "I have been foolish—I have been weak." . . . But as she gazed abstractedly on her little fire, and thought—thought—thought of all the chain of events (each so little in itself, yet all so linked together as to produce an important whole,) by which she, the sickly, crooked, little Betsy Compton, had become the proprietor of the long-preserved patrimony of her ancestors, . . . and also, when she remembered the infinite chances which had existed against either of her portionless, uneducated nieces forming such a marriage as might produce a child of gentle blood to be her successor,—when she thought of all this, and that, notwithstanding the lieutenant's poverty, the name of Willoughby could disgrace none to which it might be joined, she could not but feel that all things had been managed for her better than she could have managed them for herself.

"And if," thought she, "I *was* influenced, by hearing my poor father so accurately described, to bind myself at once by a promise to make little Agnes my heir, how do I know but that Providence intended it should be so?"

"Is my freedom of action then gone for ever?" she continued, carrying on her mental soliloquy. The idea was painful to her, and her head sunk upon her breast as she brooded upon it.

"Not so!" she muttered to herself, after some minutes' cogitation. "I am not pledged to this, nor shall it be so. If, indeed, some emanation from my father's mind has made *itself felt by his children* this night, it ought not to make a *timid slave of me*, but rather rouse my courage and my strength

to do something more than mere justice to the race that seems so strangely intrusted to my care. And so I will! . . . if the girl be such a one as may repay the trouble; . . . if not, I will show that I have still some freedom left."

Miss Compton had never seen Agnes Willoughby from the time she first took her from Silvertown. Deeply shocked at the profound ignorance in which she found the poor little girl when she visited Compton Bassett, she had set herself very earnestly to discover where she could immediately place her, with the best chance of her recovering the time she had so negligently been permitted to lose, and by good luck heard of a clergyman's family in which young ladies were received for a stipend of fifty pounds a year, and treated more like the children of affectionate parents than the pupils of mercenary teachers. The good spinster heard all this, and was well pleased by the description; yet would she not trust to it; but breaking through all her habits, she put herself into a post-chaise and drove to the rectory of Exmpton, a distance of at least twenty miles from the town of Silvertown. Here she found every thing she wished to find; a small, regular establishment, a lady-like and very intelligent woman, with an accomplished young person (her only child), fully capable of undertaking the education of a gentleman's daughter; while the venerable father of the family and of the parish, by his gentle manners and exemplary character, ensured exactly the sort of respectability in the home she sought for the little Agnes, which she considered as its most essential feature.

The preliminaries were speedily arranged, and as soon as a neat and sufficient wardrobe was ready for her use, her final separation from her improvident grandmother took place in the manner that has been related.

When Miss Compton left the little girl in the charge of Mrs. Wilmot, she had certainly no idea of her remaining there above three years without visiting or being seen by any of her family; but Mrs. Wilmot, in her subsequent letters, so strongly urged the advantage of not disturbing studies so late begun, and now proceeding so satisfactorily, that our reasonable aunt Betsy willingly submitted to her remaining quietly where she was; an arrangement rendered the more desirable

by the death of her grandmother, and the breaking up of the establishment which had been her only home.

The seeing her again after this long absence was now an event of very momentous importance to Miss Compton. Should she in any way resemble either her grandmother or her aunt Barnaby, the little spinster felt that the promise so solemnly given would become a sore pain and grief to her, for rather a thousand times would she have bequeathed her carefully collected wealth to the county hospital, than have bestowed it to swell the vulgar ostentation of a Mrs. Barnaby. The power of choice, however, she felt was no longer left her. She had pledged her word, and that under circumstances of no common solemnity, that Agnes Willoughby should be her heir.

The poor little lady, as these anxious ruminations harassed her mind, became positively faint and sick as the idea occurred to her, that the eyes of little Agnes had formerly sparkled with somewhat of the brightness she thought so very hateful in her well-rouged aunt; and at length, having sat till her candle was nearly burnt out, and her fire too, she arose in order to return to the fine drawing-room, and bid her entertainers good night; but she stood with clasped hands for one moment upon the hearth-stone before she quitted it, and muttered half aloud, . . . "I have said that Agnes Willoughby shall be my heir, . . . and so she shall; . . . she shall (be she a gorgon or a second Martha) inherit the Compton Bassett acres, restored, improved, and worth at least one fourth more than when my poor father . . . Heaven give his spirit rest! . . . divided them between his children. But for my snug twelve thousand pounds sterling vested in the three per cents, and my little mortgage of eighteen hundred more for which I so regularly get my five per cent., that at least is my own, and that shall never, *never* go to enrich any one who inherits the red cheeks and bright black eyes of Miss Martha Wisett . . . No! . . . not if I am driven to choose an heir for it from the Foundling Hospital!"

Somewhat comforted in spirit by this magnanimous resolve, Miss Compton found her way to the drawing-room, and would have been fully confirmed in the wisdom of it, had *any doubt remained*, by the style and tone of Mrs. Barnaby, ~~from~~ *she found sitting* there in solitary state, her husband

being professionally engaged in the town, and her own anxiety for her dying father quite satisfied by being told that he was asleep.

"And where have you been hiding yourself, aunt Betsy, since you left papa?" said the full-dressed lady, warmed into good humour by the consciousness of her own elegance, and the delightful contrast between a married woman, sitting in her own handsome drawing-room (looking as she had just ascertained that she herself did look by a long solitary study of her image in the glass), and a poor crooked little old maid like her visiter. "I have been expecting to see you for this hour past. I hope Barnaby will be in soon, and then we will go to supper. Barnaby always eats a hot supper, and so I eat it with him for company, . . . and I hope you feel disposed to join us after your cold drive."

"I never eat any supper at all, Mrs. Barnaby."

"No, really? . . . I thought farm-house people always did, though not exactly such a supper as Barnaby's, perhaps for he always will have something nice and delicate; and so, as it pleases him, I have taken to the same sort of thing myself . . . veal cutlets and mashed potatoes, . . . or half a chicken grilled perhaps, with now and then a glass of raspberry cream, or a mince pie, as the season may be, all which I take to be very light and wholesome; and indeed Barnaby thinks so too, or else I am sure he would not let me touch it. . . . You can't think, aunt Betsy, what a fuss he makes about me. . . . To be sure, he is a perfect model of a husband."

"God grant she may be the colour of a tallow-candle, and her eyes as pale and lustreless as those of a dead whiting!" mentally ejaculated the whimsical spinster; but in reply to her niece she said nothing. After sitting, however, for about ten minutes in the most profound silence, she rose and said, —

"I should like to have a bed-candle, if you please, ma'am. I need not wait to see the doctor. If he thinks there is any alteration in my brother, he will be kind enough to let me know."

The lady of the mansion condescendingly rang the bell, which her livery-boy answered with promptness, for he was exceedingly well drilled, Mrs. Barnaby having little else to do *than to keep him* and her two maids in proper order; . . .

the desired candle was brought, and Miss Compton, having satisfied herself that her brother still slept, retired to rest:

The following day was an important one to her race; . . . the last male of the Compton Basset family expired, and the young girl to whom its small but ancient patrimony was to descend, appeared for the first time before Miss Compton in the character of her heiress.

It was about mid-day when the postchaise which conveyed Agnes arrived at Mr. Barnaby's door. Had the person expected been a judge in whose hands the life and death of the spinster freeholder was placed, her heart could hardly have beat with more anxiety to catch a sight of his countenance, and to read her fate in it, than it now did to discover whether her aspect were that of a vulgar beauty or a gentlewoman.

Miss Compton was sitting in the presence of Mrs. Barnaby when the carriage stopped at the door, and had been for some hours keenly suffering from the disgust which continually increased upon her, at pretty nearly every word her companion uttered. "If she be like this creature," thought she, as she rose from her seat with nervous emotion, "if she be like her in any way . . . I will keep my promise when I die. But I will never see her more."

Nothing but her dread of encountering this hated resemblance prevented her from going down stairs to meet the important little girl; but, after a moment's fidgeting, and taking a step or two towards the door, she came back and re-seated herself. The suspense did not last long; the door was opened, and "Miss Willerby," announced:

A short, round, little creature, who, though nearly fourteen, did not look more than twelve, with cheeks as red as roses, and large dark-grey eyes, a great deal brighter than ever her aunt's or grandmother's had been, entered, and timidly stopped short in her approach to her two aunts, as if purposely to be looked at and examined.

She was looked at and examined, and judgment was passed upon her by both; differing very widely, however, as was natural enough, but in which (a circumstance much less natural, considering the qualifications for judging possessed by *the two ladies*,) the younger showed considerably more discernment than the elder. Mrs. Barnaby thought her — and she

was right — exceedingly like what she remembered her very pretty mother at the same age, just as round and rosy, but with a strong mixture of the Willoughby countenance, which was very decidedly “Patrician” both in contour and expression.

But poor Miss Compton saw nothing of all this . . . she saw only that she was short, fat, fresh-coloured, and bright-eyed! . . . This dreaded spectacle was a death-blow to all her hopes, the hated confirmation of all her fears. It was in vain that when the poor child spoke, her voice proved as sweet as a voice could be; — in vain that her natural curls fell round her neck, as soon as her bonnet was taken off, in rich chestnut clusters — in vain that the smile with which she answered Mrs. Barnaby’s question, “Do you remember me, Agnes?” displayed teeth as white and as regular as a row of pearls, — all these things were but so many items against her in the opinion of Miss Compton; for did they not altogether constitute a brilliant specimen of vulgar beauty? Had Agnes been tall, pale, and slight made, with precisely the same features, her aunt Betsy would have willingly devoted the whole of her remaining life to her, would have ungrudgingly expended every farthing of her income for her comfort and advantage, and would only have abstained from expending the principal too, because she might leave it to her untouched at her death. But now, now that she saw her, as she fancied, so very nearly approaching in appearance to every thing she most disliked, all the long-indulged habits of frugality that had enabled her (as she at this moment delighted to remember) to accumulate a fortune over which she still had entire control, seemed to rise before her, and press round her very heart, as the only means left of stouing to herself for the promise she had been led to make.

“I will see the eyes of my father’s son closed,” thought she, “and then I will leave the beauties to manage together as well as they can till mine are closed to, . . . and by that time, perhaps, the rents of the lands that I must no longer consider as my own, and my interest and my mortgages, may have grown into something rich enough to make them and theirs wish that they had other claims upon Elizabeth Compton besides being her nearest of kin.”

These thoughts passed rapidly, but their impression was

deep and lasting. Miss Compton sat in very stern and melancholy silence, such as perhaps did not ill befit the occasion that had brought them all together; but Mrs. Barnaby, whose habitual propensity to make herself comfortable, prevented her from sacrificing either her curiosity or her love of talking to ceremony, ceased not to question Agnes as to the people she had been with, the manner in which she had lived, and the amount of what she had learned.

On the first subject she received nothing in return but unbounded, unqualified expressions of praise and affection, such as might either be taken for the unmeaning hyperbole of a silly speaker, or the warm outpouring of well-deserved affection and gratitude; so Miss Compton classed all that Agnes said respecting the family of the Wilmots under the former head: her record of their manner of living produced exactly the same result; and on the important chapter of her improvements, the genuine modesty of the little girl did her great disservice; for when, in answer to Mrs. Barnaby's questions Do you understand French? Can you dance? Can you play? Can you draw?" she invariably answered, "A little," Miss Compton failed not to make a mental note upon it, which, if spoken, would have been, "Little enough, I dare say."

This examination had lasted about half an hour, when Mr. Barnaby entered, and addressing them all, said, "Poor Mr. Compton has woke up, and appears quite collected, but from his pulse, I do not think he can last long Is this Miss Willoughby, Martha? I am sorry that your first visit, my dear, should be so sad a one; but you had better all come now, and take leave of him."

The three ladies rose immediately, and, without speaking, followed Mr. Barnaby to the bed-side of the dying man. He was evidently sinking fast, but knew them all, and expressed pleasure at the sight of Agnes. "Dear child!" he said, looking earnestly at her, "I am glad she is come to take my blessing. . . . God bless you, Agnes! She is very like God bless you, Agnes! God bless you all!"

Mr. Barnaby took his wife by the arm and led her away; she took her weeping niece with her, but Miss Compton shook *her head when invited by Mr. Barnaby to follow them, and in* *very few minutes completed the duty to perform which she*

had left her solitude, for with her own hands she closed her brother's eyes, and then stole to her room, from which she speedily despatched an order for a postchaise to come immediately to the door.

The conduct and manners of Mr. Barnaby had pleased the difficult little lady greatly, and she would willingly have shaken hands with him before leaving his house; but to do this she must have re-entered the drawing-room, and again seen Mrs. Barnaby and Agnes, a penance which she felt quite unequal to perform; so, leaving a civil message for him with the maid, she went down stairs with as little noise as possible as soon as the chaise was announced, and immediately drove off to Compton Basett.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BARNABY PAYS A VISIT TO COMPTON BASETT, AND RECEIVES FROM THE HEIRESS A FORMAL CONGÉ.—AGNES IS SENT BACK TO SCHOOL, AND REMAINS THERE TILL CALLED HOME BY THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH.

SOME surprise and great indignation were expressed by Mrs. Barnaby on hearing that Miss Compton had departed without the civility of taking leave. She resented greatly the rudeness to herself, but, as she justly said, the meaning of it was much more important to Agnes than to her.

"What is to become of her, Mr. Barnaby, I should like to know?" . . . said the angry lady. "Agnes says that Mrs. Wilmot expects her back directly, and who is to pay the expense of sending her, I wonder?"

Mr. Barnaby assured her in reply that there would be no difficulty about that, adding, that they should doubtless hear from Miss Compton as soon as she had recovered the painful effect of the scenes at which she had so lately been present.

Days passed away, however, the funeral was over, and every thing in the family of Mr. Barnaby restored to its usual routine, yet still they heard nothing of Miss Compton.

"I see clearly how it is," said the shrewd lady of the mansion. "Aunt Betsy means to throw the whole burden of poor

dear little Agnes upon us, . . . and what in the world are we to do with her, Barnaby?"

"I cannot think she has any such intention, Martha. After the excellent education she has been giving her for the last three or four years, it is hardly likely that she would suddenly give her up, when it is impossible but she must have been delighted with her. But, at any rate, make yourself easy, my dear Martha; if she abandons her, we will not; we have no children of our own, and I think the best thing we can do is to adopt this dear girl. . . . She is really the sweetest little creature I ever saw in my life. I can assure you, that when her education is finished, I, for one, should be delighted to have her live with us. . . . What say you to it, Martha?"

"I am sure you are goodness itself, my dear Barnaby; and if the crabbed, crooked old maid would just promise at once to leave her the little she may have left after all her ostentatious charities, I should make no objection whatever to our adopting Agnes. She is just like poor Sophy, and it certainly is a pleasure to look at her."

"Well, then, don't fret yourself any more about aunt Betsy. I will call upon her one of these days when I happen to be going Compton Basett way, and find out, if I can, what she means to do about sending her back to Mrs. Wilmot. It would be a pity not to finish her education, for it is easy to see that she has had great justice done her."

It was not, however, till some word from Agnes gave him to understand that she was herself very anxious about going on with her studies, and desirous of letting Mrs. Wilmot know what was become of her, that he made or met an opportunity of conversing with Miss Compton. He found her reading a novel in her chimney corner, and dressed in deep, but very homely mourning. She received him civilly, nay, there was even something of kindness in her manner when she reverted to the time she had passed in his house, and thanked him for the hospitality he had shown her. He soon perceived, however, that the name of Agnes produced no feeling of interest; but that, on the contrary, when he mentioned her, the expression of the old lady's face changed from very pleasing serenity to peevish discomfort; so he wisely determined to make what *she had to say a matter of business*, and immediately entered upon it accordingly.

“ My principal reason, Miss Compton, for troubling you with a visit,” said he, “ is to learn what are your wishes and intentions respecting Miss Willoughby. Is it your purpose to send her back to Mrs. Wilmot ? ”

“ I have already been at a great and very inconvenient expense, Mr. Barnaby, for the education of Agnes Willoughby ; but as I have no intention whatever of straitening my poor little income any further by incurring cost on her account, I am glad that what I have done has been of the nature most likely to make her independent of me and of you too, Mr. Barnaby, in future. When I first placed her with Mrs. Wilmot I agreed to keep her there for five years, seventeen months of which are still unexpired. To this engagement I am willing to adhere ; and though I can't say I think her a very bright girl, but rather perhaps a little inclining towards the contrary, yet still I imagine that when she knows she has her own bread to get, she may be induced to exert herself sufficiently during the next year and five months to enable her to take the place of governess to very young children, or perhaps that of teacher in a second or third rate school. That's my motion about her, Mr. Barnaby ; and now, if you please, I never wish to hear any more upon the subject.”

Greatly displeas'd by the manner in which Miss Compton spoke of his young favourite, Mr. Barnaby rose, and very dryly wished her good morning ; adding, however, that no farther delay should take place in sending Miss Willoughby back to resume her studies.

He was then bowing off, but the little lady stopped him, saying, “ As I have been the means of sending the child to such a distance from her nearest relation, I mean your wife, sir, it is but just that I should pay such travelling expenses as are consequent upon it. Here, sir, is a ten-pound note that I have carefully set apart for this purpose ; have the kindness to dispense it for her as may seem most convenient. And now, sir, farewell ! I wish not again to have my humble retreat disturbed by any persons so much above me in all worldly advantages as you and your elegant wife ; and having performed what I thought to be my duty by the little Willoughby, I beg to have nothing farther to do with her. I dare say your lady will grow exceedingly fond of her, for it seems to me that they are vastly alike ; and if that happens, there will be no damage

of the young girl's wanting any thing that a poor little sickly and deformed old body like me could do for her. Good morning, Mr. Barnaby."

Mr. Barnaby silently received the ten pounds, which he thought he had no right to refuse; and, having patiently waited till Miss Compton had concluded her speech, he returned her "good morning," and took his leave.

The worthy apothecary's account of his visit produced considerable sensation. Agnes indeed received it in silence, but the offensive brightness of her eyes was dimmed for a moment or two by a few involuntary tears. Her young heart was disappointed; for not only had the strong liking conceived by the Wilmot family for her aunt Betsy led her to believe that she must unquestionably like her too, but she gratefully remembered her former gentle, quiet, kindness to herself; and (worse still), on being brought back amongst her relatives, she had, contrary to what is usual in such cases, conceived the greatest predilection for the only one among them who did not like her at all.

But it was not in silence that Mrs. Barnaby received her husband's statement of the capricious old lady's firmly pronounced resolve of never having any thing more to do with Agnes Willoughby. All the old familiar epithets of abuse came forth again as fresh and vigorous as if but newly coined; and though these were mixed up with language which it was by no means agreeable to hear, her judicious husband suffered her to run on without opposition till she was fairly out of breath, and then closed the conversation by putting a bed-candle into her hand, and saying,—

"Now let us all go to bed, my dear, . . . and I dare say you will have much pleasure in proving to your peevish relative that, as long as you live, Agnes will want no other aunt to take care of her."

The good seed sown with these words brought forth fruit abundantly. Mrs. Barnaby could not do enough in her own estimation to prove to the whole town of Silverton the contrast between Miss Compton and herself—the difference between a bad aunt and a good one.

Fortunately for the well-being of Agnes at this important period of her existence, she had inspired a strong feeling of affectionate interest in a more rational being than Mrs. Bar-

naby ; her well-judging husband thought they should do better service to the young girl by sending her back to Mrs. Wilmot with as little delay as possible, than by keeping her with them for the purpose of proving to all the world that they were the fondest and most generous uncle and aunt that ever a dependant niece was blest with, and she was sent back to Empton accordingly.

In order to do justice to the kindness of Mr. Barnaby's adoption of the desolate girl, it must be remembered that neither he nor his wife had any knowledge of the scene which passed between Miss Compton and her brother before his death, neither had they the least idea that the old lady possessed any thing beyond her original moiety of the Compton Basett estate ; and they both believed her to be so capricious as to render it very probable (although it was remembered she had once talked of leaving it to those who had claims on her) that some of the poor of her parish might eventually become her heirs, — an idea which the unaccountable dislike she appeared to have taken to Agnes greatly tended to confirm.

Once during the time that remained for her continuance with the Wilmots, Agnes paid a fortnight's visit to the abode she was now taught to consider as her home : the next time she entered it (a few weeks only before the period fixed for the termination of her studies), she was summoned thither by the very sudden death of her excellent and valuable friend Mr. Barnaby. This event produced an entire and even violent change in her prospects and manner of life, as well as in those of her aunt ; and it is from this epoch that the narrative promised by the title of "The Widow Barnaby" actually commences, the foregoing pages being only a necessary prologue to the appearance of my heroine in that character.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOW BARNABY ENTERS ACTIVELY ON HER NEW EXISTENCE. — HER WEALTH. — HER HAPPY PROSPECTS. — MRS. WILMOT VISITS MISS COMPTON, AND OBTAINS LEAVE TO INTRODUCE AGNES WILLOUGHBY.

Mrs. BARNABY was really very sorry for the death of her husband, and wept, with little or no effort, several times during the dismal week that preceded his interment ; but she was not

a woman to indulge long in so very unprofitable a weakness; and accordingly, as soon as the funeral was over, and the will read, by which he left her sole executrix and sole legatee of all he possessed, she very rationally began to meditate upon her position, and upon the best mode of enjoying the many good things which had fallen to her share.

She certainly felt both proud and happy as she thought of her independence and her wealth. Of the first she unquestionably had as much as it was possible for woman to possess, for no human being existed who had any right whatever to control her. Of the second, her judgment would have been more correct had she better understood the value of money. Though it is hardly possible any day should pass without adding something to the knowledge of all civilised beings on this subject, it is nevertheless certain that there are two modes of education which lead the mind in after life into very erroneous estimates respecting it. The one is being brought up to spend exactly as much money as you please, and the other having it deeply impressed on your mind that you are to spend none at all. In the first case, it is long before the most complete reverse of fortune can make the *ci-devant* rich man understand how a little money can be eked out, so as to perform the office of a great deal; and in the last, the change from having no money to having some will often, if it come suddenly, so puzzle all foregone conclusions, as to leave the possessor wonderfully little power to manage it discreetly.

The latter case was pretty nearly that of Mrs. Barnaby: when she learned that her dear lost husband had left her uncontrolled mistress of property to the amount of three hundred and seventy-two pounds per annum, besides the house and furniture, the shop and all it contained, she really felt as if her power in this life were colossal, and that she might roam the world either for conquest or amusement, or sustain in Silverton the style of a retired duchess, as might suit her fancy best.

Never yet had this lady's temper been so amiably placid, or so caressingly kind, as during the first month of her widowhood. She gave Agnes to understand that she wished to be considered as her mother, and trusted that they should find in each other all the happiness and affection which that tenderest of ties was so well calculated to produce.

"It will not be my fault, Agnes," she said, "if such be not the case. Thanks be to Heaven, and my dear lost Barnaby, I have wealth enough to consult both your pleasure and advantage in my future mode of life; and be assured, my dear, that however much my own widowed feelings might lead me to prefer the tranquil consolations of retirement, I shall consider it my duty to live more for you than for myself; and I will indeed hasten, in spite of my feelings, to lay aside these sad weeds, that I may be able, with as little delay as possible, to give you such an introduction to the world as my niece has a right to expect."

Agnes was at a loss what to reply; she had still all the frank straight-forwardness of a child who has been educated by unaffected, sensible people, and yet she knew that she must not on this occasion say quite what she thought, which would probably have been, —

"Pray, don't fancy that I want you to throw aside your widow's weeds for me, aunt. . . . I don't believe you are one half as sorry for uncle Barnaby's death as I am." . . . But fortunately there was no mixture of *bêtise* in her frankness; and though it might have been beyond her power to express any great satisfaction at being thus addressed, she had no difficulty in saying, — "You are very kind to me, aunt," for this was true.

Notwithstanding this youthful frankness of mind, however, Agnes had by this time lost in a great measure that very childish look which distinguished her at the time her appearance so little pleased the fastidious taste of Miss Compton. She was still indeed in very good health, which was indicated by a colour as fresh, and almost as delicate too, as that of the wild rose; but her rapid growth during the last two years had quite destroyed the offensive "roundness," and her tall, well-made person, gave as hopeful a promise as could be wished for of womanly grace and beauty. The fair face was already the very perfection of loveliness; and had the secretly proud Miss Compton seen her as she walked in her deep heavy mourning beside her wide-spreading aunt to church, on the Sunday when that lady first restored herself to the public eye, she might perchance have thought, that not only was she worthy to inherit Compton Basett and all its accumulated rents, but any

other glory and honour that this little earth of ours could bestow.

* * * * *

A feeling of strong mutual affection between the parties led both the Wilmot family and Agnes to petition earnestly that the few weeks which remained of the stipulated (and already paid for) five years, might be completed ; and Mrs. Barnaby, though it was really somewhat against her inclination, consented.

But though she had not desired this renewed absence of her niece, the notable widow determined to put it to profit, and set about a final arrangement of all her concerns with an activity that proved good Mr. Barnaby quite right in not having troubled her with any assistant executor.

She soon contrived to learn who it was who wished to succeed her "dear Barnaby," and managed matters so admirably well as to make the eager young man pay for the house, furniture, shop, &c. &c., about half as much again as they were worth, cleverly contriving, moreover, to retain possession for three months.

This important business being settled, she set herself earnestly and deliberately to consider what, when these three months should be expired, she should do with her freedom, her money, herself, and her niece. In deciding upon this question, she called none to counsel, for she had sense enough to avow to herself that she should pay not the slightest attention to any opinion but her own. In silence and in solitude, therefore, she pondered upon the future ; and, to assist her speculations, she drew forth from the recesses of an old-fashioned bureau sundry documents and memoranda relative to the property bequeathed to her by her husband.

It was evident that her income would now somewhat exceed four hundred a-year, and this appeared to her amply sufficient to assist the schemes already working in her head for future aggrandizement, but by no means equal to what she felt her beauty and her talents gave her a right to hope for.

"It is, however, a handsome income," thought she, "and such a one as, with my person, may, and must, if properly made use of, lead to all I wish!"

Mrs. Barnaby had once heard it said by a clever man, that

numan wishes might oftener be achieved, did mortals better know how to set about obtaining them.

“First,” said the oracle, “let him be sure to find out what his wishes really are. This ascertained, let him, in the second place, employ all his acuteness to discover what is required for their fulfilment. Thirdly, let him examine himself and his position, in order to decide how much he, or it, can contribute towards this. Fourthly, let him subtract the sum of the capabilities he possesses from the total of means required. Fifthly, let him learn by, with, and in his heart of hearts, what it is that constitutes the remainder; and sixthly, and lastly, let him gird up the loins of his resolution, and start forth DETERMINED to acquire them. Whoso doeth this, shall *self-dom* fail.”

In the course of her visitings, military friendships and all included, Mrs. Barnaby, even in the small arena of Silverton, had heard several wise things in her day; but none of them ever produced such lasting effect as the words I have just quoted. They touched some chord within her that vibrated, . . . not indeed with such a thrill as they might have made to ring along the nerves of a fine creature new to life, and emulous of all things good and great, but with a little sharp twitch, just at that point of the brain where self-love expands itself into a mesh of ways and means, instinct with will, to catch all it can that may be brought home to glut the craving for enjoyment; and so pregnant did they seem to her of the only wisdom that she wished to master, that her memory seized upon them with extraordinary energy, nor ever after relinquished its hold.

Little, however, could it profit her at the time she heard it; but she kept it, “like an ape in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed, to be last swallowed.”

It was upon these words that she now pondered. Her two elbows set on the open bureau, her legs stretched under it, her lips resting upon the knuckles of her clasped hands, and her eyes fixed in deep abstraction on the row of pigeon-holes before her, she entered upon a sort of self-catechism, which ran thus:—

Q. What is it that I most wish for on earth?

A. A rich and fashionable husband.

Q. What is required to obtain this?

A. Beauty, fortune, talents, and a free entrance into good society.

Q. Do I possess any of these? . . . and which?

A. I possess beauty, fortune, and talents.

Q. What remains wanting?

A. A free entrance into good society.

"TRUE!" she exclaimed aloud, "it is that I want, and it is that I must procure."

Notwithstanding her sanguine estimate of herself, the widow, when she arrived at this point, was fain to confess that she did not exactly know how this necessary addition to her ways and means was to be acquired. Beyond the town of Silvertown, and a thinly inhabited circuit of a mile or two round it, she had not a personal acquaintance in the world. This was a very perplexing consideration for a lady determined upon finding her way into the first circles, but its effect was rather to strengthen than relax her energies.

There was, however, one person, and she truly believed one only in the wide world, who might, at her first setting out upon her progress, be useful to her. This was a sister of Mr. Barnaby's, married to a clothier, whose manufactory was at Frome, but whose residence was happily at Clifton, near Bristol. She had never seen this lady, or any of her family, all intercourse between the brother and sister having of late years consisted in letters, not very frequent, and the occasional interchange of presents,—a jar of turtle being now and then forwarded by mail from Bristol, and dainty quarters of Exmoor mutton, and tin pots of clouted cream, returned from Silvertown.

Nevertheless Mrs. Peters was her sister-in-law just as much as if they had lived next door to each other for the last five years; and she had, of course, a right to all the kindness and hospitality so near a connection demands.

A clothier's wife, to be sure, was not exactly the sort of person she would have chosen, had choice been left her; but it was better than nothing, infinitely better; "and besides," as the logical widow's head went on to reason, "she may introduce me to people above herself. . . . At a public place, too, like Clifton, it must be so easy! And then every new acquaintance I make will serve to lead on to another."

... I am not so shy but I can turn all accidents to account; and I am not such a fool as to stand at one end of a room, when I ought to be at the other. . . ."

Mrs. Barnaby never quoted Shakspeare, or she would probably have added here, —

"Why, then the world's mine oyster, which I with *wit* will open," for it was with some such thought that her soliloquy ended.

Day by day the absence of Agnes wore away, and day after day saw some business preparatory to departure despatched. Sometimes the hours were winged by her having to pull about all the finery in her possession, and dividing it into portions, some to be abandoned for ever, some to be enveloped with reverent care in cotton and silver paper for her future use, and some to be given to the favoured Agnes.

While such cares occupied her hands, her thoughts naturally enough hurried forward to the time when she should lay aside her weeds. This was a dress so hatefully unbecoming in her estimation, that she firmly believed the inventor of it must have been actuated by some feeling akin to that which instituted the horrible Hindoo rite of which she had heard, whereby living wives were sacrificed to their departed husbands.

"Only!" she cried, bursting out into involuntary thanksgiving, "ours, thank God! is not for ever!"

To appear for the first time in the fashionable world in this frightful disguise, was quite out of the question; and consequently she could not make her purposed visit to Clifton till the time was arrived for throwing them off, and till to use her own words, "lilacs and greys were possible." Yet there were other considerations that had weight with her too.

"His sister, however, shall just see me in my widow's weeds," thought she; "it may touch her heart, perhaps, and must make her feel how very nearly we are related; but before any living soul out of the family can come near me, I will take care to look what I really am Six months! it must, I suppose, be six months first! Dreadful bore!"

The first half of this probationary term was to be passed at *Silverton*, — that was already wearing fast away, — and

for the latter part of it she determined to take lodgings in Exeter.

“ Yes . . . it shall be Exeter ! ” she exclaimed, and then added, with a perfect quiver of delight, “ Oh ! what a difference now from what it was formerly . . . How well I remember the time when a journey to Exeter appeared to me the very gayest thing in the world ! . . . and now I should no more think of staying there than a queen would think of passing her life in her bedroom ! ”

The more she meditated on the future, indeed, the more enamoured did she become of it, till at length, her affairs being very nearly all brought to a satisfactory conclusion, a restless sort of impatience seized upon her ; and nearly a fortnight before the time fixed for the return of Agnes she wrote a very peremptory letter of recall, but altogether omitted to point out either the mode of conveyance or the protection she deemed necessary for her during the journey.

Perhaps Mrs. Wilmot was not sorry for this, as it afforded her an excuse for remaining herself to the last possible moment with a pupil who had found the way to create almost a maternal interest in her heart, and moreover gave her an opportunity of seeking an interview with the singular but interesting recluse who five years before had placed in her hands the endearing, though ignorant little girl, whose education had proved a task so unusually pleasing.

The principal reason, however, for Mrs. Wilmot's wishing to pay Miss Compton a visit, arose from the description Agnes had given of her conduct towards her, and of the system of non-intercourse which it was so evidently the little lady's intention to maintain.

Without having uttered a word resembling fault-finding or complaint, Agnes had somehow or other made the Wilmots feel that, though aunt Betsy certainly did not like her, she liked aunt Betsy a great deal better than she did aunt Barnaby ; and this, added to the favourable impression Miss Compton had herself left upon their minds, made the good Mrs. Wilmot exceedingly anxious that she should not remain ignorant of the treasure she possessed in her young relation.

The delay of a few days before Mrs. Wilmot could take her pupil home, was inevitable ; and when they arrived Mrs. *Barnaby* had bustled her affairs into such a state of forward-

ness, that, though she received them without any great appearance of melancholy or ill-humour, she hinted pretty plainly that Agnes came too late to be of much use to her in packing.

Mrs. Wilmot made a very sufficient apology for the delay, and then took leave, saying that she should remain in Silverton that night, and drive out the next morning to pay her compliments to Miss Compton. The bare mention of the spinster's name at once converted the widow's civility into rudeness; she offered her guest neither refreshment nor accommodation of any kind; and poor Agnes had the pain of seeing her dearest friend depart to pass the night at an inn, when she would have gladly stood by to watch her slumbers all night, might she have offered her own bed for her use.

On the following morning Mrs. Wilmot paid her purposed visit to Miss Compton, and found her in dress, occupation, and mode of life, so precisely what she has been described before, that not a word need be added on the subject. Greatly different, however, was the welcome she accorded that lady to what we have formerly seen her bestow upon her relatives. She greeted her, indeed, with a smile so cordial, and a tone of voice so pleasantly expressive of the satisfaction her visit gave, that it was only when the object of it was brought forward, that Mrs. Wilmot, too, discovered that Miss Compton could be a very cross little old lady when she chose it.

"I shall quite *ng*, my dear madam, to hear your opinion of my pupil," said Mrs. Wilmot, "for I cannot but flatter myself that you will be delighted with her."

"Then ask me nothing about her, ma'am, if you please," replied the recluse.

"But it is near two years, Miss Compton, since you saw her, and she is wonderfully improved in that time," said Mrs. Wilmot. . . . "Yet I own I should have thought that even then, two years ago, when you did see her, that you must have found her a very charming girl, full of sweetness and intelligence, and with a face. . . ."

"We had better say no more about her, if you please, Mrs. Wilmot," tartly interrupted the recluse. . . . "I dare say you made the best you could of her; and it is no fault of yours that old Wisett's great-granddaughter should be a *Wisett*; . . . but I hate the very sight of her, as I do, and

nave done, and ever shall do, that of all their kin and kind . . . so it is no good to talk of it."

"The sight of her!" reiterated the astonished Mrs. Wilmot. "Why, my dear Miss Compton, she is reckoned by every one that sees her to be one of the loveliest creatures that nature ever formed. . . . If her timid, artless manners do not please you, it is unfortunate; but that you should not think her beautiful, is impossible."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. . . . I should not care a straw for the manners of a child, for I know that time and care might change them, . . . but it is her person that I can't endure; . . . there is no disputing about taste, you know. I should not have thought, indeed, that she was quite the style for you to admire so violently; . . . but, of course, that is nothing to me. . . . I know that the look of her eyes, and the colour of her cheeks, is exactly what I think the most detestable; . . . there is no right or wrong in the matter. . . . it is all fancy, and the sight of her makes me sick. . . . Pray, ma'am, say no more about her."

There was but one way in which Mrs. Wilmot could comprehend this extraordinary antipathy to what was so little calculated to inspire it, and this was by supposing that Miss Compton's personal deformity rendered the sight of beauty painful to her; an interpretation, indeed, as far as possible from the truth; for the little spinster was peculiarly sensible to beauty of form and expression, wherever she found it; but it was the only explanation that suggested itself; and with mingled feelings of pity and contempt Mrs. Wilmot replied,—"There may be no right or wrong, Miss Compton, in a judgment passed on external appearance only; for it may, as you observe, be purely a matter of taste: but surely it must be otherwise of an aversion conceived against a near relative, whose amiable disposition, faultless conduct, and brilliant talents, justly entitle her to the love, esteem, and admiration of the whole world. . . . This is not merely a matter of taste, and in this there may be much wrong."

Miss Compton appeared struck by these words, but after pondering a moment upon them replied,—"And how can I tell, Mrs. Wilmot, but that your judgment of this child's character *and disposition may be as much distorted by unreasonable partiality, as your opinion of her vulgar-looking person?*"

A new light here broke in upon the mind of Mrs. Wilmot ; she remembered the remarkable plumpness of the little Agnes before she made that sudden start in her growth which, in the course of two important years, had converted a clumsy-looking child into a tall, slight, elegantly-made girl ; and with greatly increased earnestness of manner she answered, —

“ I only ask you to see her once, Miss Compton. . . . I have no wish whatever that your judgment should be influenced by mine with respect either to the person or the mind of Agnes Willoughby ; but I greatly wish that your own opinion of her should be formed upon what she now is, and not upon what she has been. I am sure you must feel that this is reasonable. . . . Will you then promise me that you will see her ? ”

“ I will,” . . . replied Miss Compton. “ The request is reasonable, and I promise to comply with it. Yet it can only be on one condition, Mrs. Wilmot.”

“ And what is that, Miss Compton ? ”

“ That I may see her without her horrid aunt Barnaby.”

Mrs. Wilmot smiled involuntarily, but answered gravely, “ Of course, Miss Compton, that must be as you please. . . . Rather than you should fail to see my pretty Agnes, I will remain another day from home on purpose to bring her to you myself. Will you receive us if we come over to you at this hour to-morrow morning ? ”

“ I will,” . . . again replied the recluse ; “ and, whatever may be the result of the interview, I shall hold myself indebted to the kind feelings which have led you to insist upon it.”

“ Thank you, thank you ! ” said Mrs. Wilmot, rising to take her leave. “ To-morrow, then, you will see me again, with my young charge.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN IMPORTANT CORRESPONDENCE, AND AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW.

ON returning to her solitary quarters at the King's Head, Mrs. Wilmot called for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote the following note to her young pupil

‘ MY DEAR AGNES,

“ I am just returned from a visit to Compton Basett, where I was very kindly received by your aunt. She wishes to see you before you leave the neighbourhood, and I have promised to take you to her to-morrow morning; I will therefore call at eleven o’clock, when I hope I shall find you ready to accompany me. With compliments to Mrs. Barnaby, believe me, dear Agnes,

“ Affectionately yours,

“ MARY WILMOT.”

To this epistle she speedily received the following answer: —

“ MRS. BARNABY presents her compliments to Mrs. Wilmot, and begs to know if there is any reason why she should not join the party to Compton Basett to-morrow morning? If not, she requests Mrs. Wilmot’s permission to accompany her in the drive, as the doing so will be a considerable convenience; Mrs. Barnaby wishing to pay her duty to her aunt before she leaves the country.”

To return a negative to this request was disagreeable: being absolutely necessary, however, it was done without delay; but it was with burning cheeks and flashing eyes that Mrs. Barnaby read the following civil refusal: —

“ MRS. WILMOT regrets extremely that she is under the necessity of declining the company of Mrs. Barnaby to-morrow morning, but Miss Compton expressly desired that Agnes should be brought to her alone.”

To this Mrs. Barnaby replied, —

“ As Mrs. Wilmot has been pleased to take upon herself the office of go-between, she is requested to inform Miss Betsy Compton, that the aunt who has adopted Agnes Willoughby, intends to bestow too much personal care upon her, to permit her paying any visits in which she cannot accompany her.”

The vexed and discomfited Mrs. Wilmot returned to Compton Basett with these two notes in her hand instead of the pretty Agnes, and her mortification was very greatly increased *by perceiving that the disappointment of the old lady fully equalled her own.* This obvious sympathy of feeling led to a

more confidential intercourse than had ever before taken place between the solitary heiress and any other person whatever; so contrary, indeed, was this species of frank communication to her habits, that it was produced rather by the necessity of giving vent to her angry feelings, than for the gratification of confessing any other.

In reply to her first indignant burst of resentment, Mrs. Wilmot said, —

“ I lament the consequences of this ill-timed impertinence, for my poor pupil's sake, more than it is easy for me to explain to you, Miss Compton. . . . Do me the justice to believe that I am not in the habit of interfering in the family concerns of my pupils, and then you will be better able to appreciate the motives and feelings which still lead me to urge you not to withdraw your protection and kindness from Agnes Willoughby.”

“ I do believe that your motives are excellent; and I can believe, too, that if your pupil deserve half you have said of her, the protection and kindness even of such a being as myself might be more beneficial to her than being left at the mercy of this hateful, vulgar-minded woman. . . . But what would you have me do, Mrs. Wilmot? You would not ask me to leave my flowers, my bees, my books, and my peaceful home, to keep watch over Mrs. Barnaby, and see that she does not succeed in making this poor girl as detestable as herself? You would not expect me to do this, would you?”

“ No, Miss Compton; no one, I think, would willingly impose such a task upon you as that of watching Mrs. Barnaby. But I see no objection to your watching Agnes.”

“ And how is the one to be done without the other? It is quite natural that the child of one of Miss Martha Wisett's daughters, should live with the other of them. My relationship to this girl is remote in comparison to hers.”

“ Miss Compton,” replied Mrs. Wilmot, “ I fear that my acquaintance with you hardly justifies the pertinacity with which I feel disposed to urge this point; but, indeed, it is of vital importance to one that I very dearly love, and one whom you would dearly love too, would you permit yourself to know her.”

“ Do not apologise to me for the interest you take in her,” returned the old lady in a tone rather more encouraging. . . .

"There is more need, perhaps, that I should apologise for the want of it . . . and . . . to say truth," she added after a considerable pause, "I have no objection to explain my motive to you, . . . though it has never fallen in my way before to meet any one to whom I wished to do this. My life has been an odd one; . . . though surrounded by human beings with whom I have lived on the most friendly terms, I have passed my existence, as to any thing like companionship, entirely alone. I have never been dull, for I have read incessantly, and altogether I think it likely that I have been happier than most people. But in the bosom of this unrepining solitude it is likely enough that I have nursed opinions into passions, and distastes into hatred. Thus, Mrs. Wilmot, the reasonable opinion that I set out with, for instance, when inheriting my father's long-descended acres, that it was my duty in all things to sustain as much as in me lay the old claim to gentle blood which attached to my race, (injured, perhaps, in some degree, by this division of its patrimony in my favour,) even this reasonable opinion, Mrs. Wilmot, has by degrees grown, perhaps, into unreasonable strength; for I would rather, madam, press age and ugliness remarkable as my own to my heart, as the acknowledged descendant of that race, than a vulgar, coarse-minded, coarse-looking thing, though she were as buxom as Martha Wisett when my poor silly brother married her."

The latter part of this speech was uttered with great rapidity, and an appearance of considerable excitement; but this quickly subsided, and the little spinster became as pale and composed as usual, while she listened to Mrs. Wilmot's quiet accents in reply.

"There is nothing to surprise me in this, Miss Compton; the feeling is a very natural one. But the more strongly it is expressed, the more strongly must I wonder at your permitting the sole descendant of your ancient race to be left at the mercy of a Mrs. Barnaby."

Not all the eloquence in the world could have gone so far towards obtaining the object Mrs. Wilmot had in view as this concluding phrase.

"You are right! . . . excellent woman! . . . You are right, and I deserve to see my father's acres peopled by a race of *Barnabys*. . . I will save her! . . ."

But here the poor old lady stopped. A sudden panic seized her, and she sat for several minutes positively trembling at the idea that she might unadvisedly take some step which should involve her in the horrible necessity of being incumbered for the rest of her life with a companion whose looks or manner might remind her of a Martha Wisett or a Mrs. Barnaby.

"I dare not do it!" she exclaimed at last. "Do not ask it . . . do not force me ; . . . or, at any rate, contrive to let me see her first, in a shop, or in the street, or any way. . . . I can decide on nothing till I have seen her!"

"I would do any thing within my power to arrange this for you," replied Mrs. Wilmot ; "but I cannot delay my return beyond to-morrow ; nor do I believe that my agency would render this more easy. Why should you not at once call on both your nieces, Miss Compton ? There would be no difficulty in this, and it would give you the best possible opportunity of judging both of the appearance and manners of Agnes."

"Both my nieces ! . . . no difficulty ! . . . You understand little or nothing of my feelings. . . . But go home, go home, Mrs. Wilmot. Do your own duty, which is a plain one, . . . and leave me to find out mine, if I can."

"You will not, then, abandon the idea of seeing this poor girl, Miss Compton ?"

"No, I will not," was the reply, pronounced almost solemnly.

"Then, farewell ! my dear madam ; I can ask no more than this, except, indeed, your forgiveness for having asked thus much so perseveringly."

"I thank you for it, Mrs. Wilmot. . . . I believe you are a very good woman, and I will endeavour to act, if God will give me grace, as I think you would approve, if you could read all the feelings of my heart. Farewell !"

And so they parted ; the active, useful matron to receive the eager welcome of her expecting family, and the solitary recluse to the examination of her own thoughts, which were alternately both sweet and bitter, sometimes cheering her with a vision of domestic happiness and endearment to soothe her declining age, and sometimes making her shudder as she fancied *her tranquil existence invaded and destroyed by the presence of one whom she might strive in vain to love.*

CHAPTER XII.

CROSSING A LADY'S MAID.—A HAPPY MEETING UNHAPPILY BROKEN IN UPON.—MISS COMPTON UTTERS A LONG FAREWELL TO AGNES.

Mrs. WILMOT did not leave Silverton without taking an affectionate leave of Agnes; and when this was over, the poor girl felt herself wholly, and for ever, consigned to the authority and companionship of Mrs. Barnaby. It would be difficult to trace out the cause of the sharp pang which this conviction brought with it; but it was strong enough at that moment to rob the future of all the bright tints through which eyes of sixteen are apt to look at it. She cherished, certainly, a deep feeling of gratitude for the kindness that afforded her a home; but, unhappily, she cherished also a feeling equally strong, that it was less easy to repay the obligation with affection than with gratitude.

Not a syllable had been said to her by Mrs. Wilmot respecting the interview she was still likely to have with her aunt Compton; for she had promised this secrecy to the nervous and uncertain old lady, who, while trembling with anxious impatience to see this important niece, shrunk before the difficulties she foresaw in finding such an opportunity as she sought, for she still resolutely persevered in her determination not to see Mrs. Barnaby with her; . . . but yet, when finally she did contrive to come within sight of the poor girl, it was exactly under the circumstances she so earnestly wished to avoid.

* * * * *

Mrs. Barnaby, in her often-meditated estimate of revenue and expenses, had arrived at the conclusion that she ought not to travel without a maid, but that the said maid must be hired at the lowest rate of wages possible. The necessity for this addition to her suite did not arise from any idle wish for personal attendance, to which she had never been much accustomed, but from the conviction that there was something in the sound of "my maid" which might be of advantage to her on many occasions.

The finding out and engaging a girl that might enact the character of lady's maid showily and cheaply, was the most

important thing still left to be done before they quitted Silver-ton. The first qualification was a tall person, that might set off to advantage such articles of the widow's cast-off finery as might be unnecessary for Agnes; the next, a willingness to accept low wages.

While meditating on the subject, it occurred to Mrs. Barnaby that one of the girls she had seen walking in procession to church with the charity-school, was greatly taller than all the rest, and, in fact, so remarkably long and lanky, that she felt convinced she might, if skilfully dressed up, pass extremely well for a stylish lady's maid.

Delighted at the idea, she immediately summoned Agnes to walk with her to the school-house, which was situated outside the town, about a mile, on the road leading to Compton Bassett. On reaching the building, her knock was answered by the schoolmistress herself, who civilly asked her commands.

"I must come in, Mrs. Sims, before I can tell you," was the reply, and it was quite true; for, as Mrs. Barnaby knew not the name of her intended Abigail, the only mode of entering upon her business, must be by pointing out the girl whose length of limb had attracted her. But no sooner had she passed the threshold than she perceived the long and slender object of her search immediately opposite to her, in the act of taking down a work-basket from the top of a high commode; which manœuvre, as it placed her on tip-toe, and obliged her to stretch out her longitude to the very utmost, displayed her to the eyes of Mrs. Barnaby to the greatest possible advantage, and convinced her very satisfactorily that her judgment had not erred.

"That is the girl I wanted to speak about," she said, pointing to the lizard-like figure opposite to her. "What is her name, Mrs. Sims?"

"This one, ma'am, as is fetching my basket?" interrogated Mrs. Sims in her turn.

"Yes, that one . . . that tall girl . . . What is her name?"

"Betty Jacks, ma'am, is her name."

"Jacks?" repeated Mrs. Barnaby, a little disconcerted; "Jacks! . . . that wo'n't do . . . I can never call her Jacks; but for that matter, I could give her another name

easy enough, to be sure And what is she good for? . . . , what can she do?"

"Not over much of any thing, ma'am. She was put late to me. But she can read, and iron a little, and can do plain work well enough when she chooses it."

"When she chooses it! . . . and she'll be sure to choose it, I suppose, when she goes to service. I want a girl to wait upon me, and to sew for me when she has nothing else to do, and I think this one will do for me very well."

"I ask your pardon, ma'am," replied Mrs. Sims; "but if I might make so bold, I would just say, that for a notable, tidy, good girl, Sally Wilkins there, that one at the end of the form, is far before Betty Jacks in being likely to suit."

"What! . . . that little thing? Why, she is a baby, Mrs. Sims."

"She is eleven months older than Betty Jacks, ma'am, and greatly beyond her in every way."

"But I don't like the look of such a little thing. The other would do for what I want much better. Come here, Betty Jacks. Should you like to go out to service with a lady who would take care that you should always be well dressed, and let you travel about with her, and see a great deal of the world?"

"Yes, my lady," replied the young maypole, grinning from ear to ear, and showing thereby a very fine set of teeth.

"Well then, Betty Jacks, I think we shall suit each other very well. But I shan't call you Betty though, nor Jacks either . . . mind that. You won't care about it, I suppose, if I find out some pretty, genteel-sounding name for you, will you?"

"No, my lady!" responded the delighted girl.

"Very well; . . . and I will give you three pounds a year wages, and good clothes enough to make you look a deal better than ever you did before. What do you say to it?"

"I'll be glad to come, and thankye, too, my lady, if father will let me."

"Who is her father, Mrs. Sims?" — "Joe Jacks the carpenter, ma'am."

"I don't suppose he is likely to make much objection to her getting such a place as mine, is he?"

"That is what I can't pretend to say, ma'am," replied the

schoolmistress very gravely I don't think Betty over steady myself, but of course it is no business of mine, and it will be far best that you should see Joe Jacks yourself, ma'am, and hear what he says about it."

"To be sure; . . . and where can I see him?"

"He'll be certain to be here to-morrow morning, ma'am, for he'll come to be paid for the bench he made for me; and if so be you would take the trouble to call again just about one, when Betty will be going home with him for the half holyday they always haves of a Saturday, why then, ma'am, you'd be quite sure to see him, and hear what he'd got to say."

"Very well, then, that will do, and we shall certainly walk over again to-morrow, if the weather is any thing like fine. — Good morning to you, Mrs. Sims! Mind what I have said to you, Betty; this is a fine chance for you, and so you must tell your father. Come along, Agnes."

It so chanced that within half an hour of their departure Miss Compton also paid a visit to the school. Mrs. Sims was one of the persons whom she had saved from severe, and probably lasting penury, by one of those judicious loans, which, never being made without good and sufficient knowledge of the party accommodated, were sure to be repaid, and enabled her to perform a most essential benefit without any pecuniary loss whatever.

There were no excursions which gave the old lady so much pleasure as those which enabled her to contemplate the good effects of this rational species of benevolence, and farmer Wright never failed to offer her a place in his chaise-cart whenever his business took him near any of the numerous cottages where this agreeable spectacle might greet her. On the present occasion he set her down at the door of the school-house, while he called upon a miller at no great distance; and Mrs. Sims, who was somewhat disturbed in mind by the visit and schemes of Mrs. Barnaby, no sooner saw her enter than she led her through the throng of young stitchers and spellers to the tidy little parlour behind.

"Well, now, Miss Compton, you are kindly welcome," she said; "and I wish with all my heart you had been here but a bit ago, for who should we have here, ma'am, but your own niece, Mrs. Barnaby."

Miss Compton knit her brows with an involuntary frown.

"And that sweet, pretty creature, Miss Willoughby, comed with her. . . . She is a beauty, to be sure, if ever there was one."

"What did they come for, Mrs. Sims?" inquired Miss Compton with sudden animation.

"Why, that is just what I want to tell you, ma'am, and to ask your advice about. She come here—Mrs. Barnaby I mean—to look after that saucy Betty Jacks, by way of taking her to be her servant, and travelling about with her; and, upon my word, Miss Compton, she might just as well take my cat there, for any good or use she's likely to be of: and besides that, ma'am, I have no ways a good opinion of the child,—for child she is, though she's such a monster in tallness;—she does not speak the truth, Miss Compton, and that's what I can't abide, and I don't think she'll do me any credit in any way; but yet I'm afraid it would be doing a bad action if I was to stand in the girl's light, and prevent her going, by telling all the ill I think of her, when they comes again to-morrow to settle about it."

Mrs. Sims ceased, and certainly expected a decided opinion from Miss Compton on the subject, for that lady had kept her eyes fixed upon her, and appeared to be listening with very profound attention; but the only reply was, "And do you think the girl will come with her?"

"Come with who, ma'am?"—"With Mrs. Barnaby, to be sure."

"Oh no, ma'am! she won't come with her. . . . She will go home, as usual, to-night, and is to come back to meet the ladies here, a little after noon to-morrow, with her father."

"But Agnes Miss Willoughby I mean, are you sure she will come back with her aunt to-morrow?"

"I am sure I can't say, ma'am, but I think she will; for I well remember Mrs. Barnaby said with her grand way, 'We will walk over to-morrow if the weather be any-ways fine.'"

Miss Compton now seemed sunk in profound meditation, of which Mrs. Sims fully hoped to reap the fruits; but once more she was disappointed, for when Miss Compton again spoke, it was only to say,—

"I want to see Agnes Willoughby, Mrs. Sims, and I do

not want to see Mrs. Barnaby. Do you think you could manage this for me, if I come here again to-morrow?"

"I am sure, ma'am," replied Mrs. Sims, looking a little surprised and a little puzzled—"I am sure there is nothing that I am not in duty bound to do for you, if done it can be; and if you will be pleased to say how the thing shall be managed, I will do my part with a right good will to make every thing go as you wish."

This was a very obliging reply, but it showed Miss Compton that she must trust to her own ingenuity for discovering the ways and means for putting her design in practice. After thinking about it a little, and looking round upon the locale, she said,—

"I will tell you how it must be. I will be here to-morrow before the time you have named to them, and you shall place me in this room. When Mrs. Barnaby is engaged in talking to the girl and her father, take Agnes by the hand and lead her in to me, saying, if you will, that you have something you wish her to see, . . . which will be no more than the truth. If Mrs. Barnaby happens to hear this, and offers to follow, then, as you value my friendship, close the door and lock it,—never mind what she thinks of it . . . I will take care her anger shall do you no harm."

"Oh dear, ma'am! I'm not the least afraid of Mrs. Barnaby's anger, . . . nor do I expect she will take any notice. She seems so very hot upon having that great awkward hoyden, Betty Jacks, that I don't think, when she is engaged with her father about it, she will be likely to take much heed of Miss Agnes and me. But at any rate, Miss Compton, I'll take good care, ma'am, that she shan't come a-near you. And now, ma'am, will you be so good as to tell me if you think I shall be doing a sin letting this idle hussy set off travelling with her?"

"No sin at all, Mrs. Sims," replied Miss Compton with decision. "Let the girl be what she may, depend upon it she is quite . . ." but here she stopped; adding a minute after, "Do go, Mrs. Sims, and see if farmer Wright's cart is come back."

A few minutes more brought the humble vehicle to the door, when the heiress climbed to her accustomed place in it, and gave herself up to meditation so unusually earnest, a

not only to defeat all the good farmer's respectful attempts at conversation, but to occupy her for one whole hour after her return, and that so completely as to prevent her from opening her half-read volume, though that volume was Walter Scott's.

Thoughts and schemes were working and arranging themselves in her head, which were, in truth, important enough to demand some leisure for their operations. This "*beauty if ever there was one,*" this poor motherless and father-forgotten Agnes, this inevitable heiress of the Compton acres, ought she, because she had found her short and fat two years before, to abandon her to the vulgar patronage of the hateful Mrs. Barnaby? A blush of shame and repentance mantled her pale cheek as this question presented itself, and she acknowledged to her own heart the sin and folly of the prejudice which had led her to turn away from the only being connected with her, to whom she could be useful. She remembered, too, in this hour of self-examination and reproach, that the father of this ill-treated girl was a gentleman; and that she ought, therefore, to have been kindly fostered by the last of the Comptons as a representative more worthy to revive their antiquated claims to patrician rank, than could have been reasonably expected from any descendant of her brother Josiah.

These thoughts having been sufficiently dwelt upon, examined, and acknowledged to be just, the arrangement of her future conduct was next to be considered; and, notwithstanding the singularly secluded life she had led, the little lady was far from being ignorant of the entire change it would be her duty to make in the whole manner of her existence, should she decide upon taking Agnes Willoughby from Mrs. Barnaby, and becoming herself her sole guardian and protectress.

Could she bear this? . . . and could she afford it? The little, weak-looking, but wiry frame of the spinster, had a spirit within it of no inconsiderable firmness; and the first of these questions was soon answered by a mentally ejaculated "I WILL," which, in sincerity and intensity of purpose, was well worth the best vow ever breathed before the altar. For *the solution of the other*, the old lady turned to her account books, and found the leading items in the column of receipts to be as follow:—

By annual rent from the Compton Basett farm	- £600
By interest on 12,000 <i>l.</i> in the Three per Cents	- 360
By interest on 1800 <i>l.</i> lent on mortgage at 5 <i>l.</i> per cent.	90
By interest on 6000 <i>l.</i> lent on mortgage at 4 <i>l.</i> per cent.	240
By interest on 2500 <i>l.</i> lent on mortgage at 5 <i>l.</i> per cent.	125

£ 1415

Of this income, (the last item of which, however, had been entered only three weeks before, being the result of the latest appropriation of her savings,) Miss Compton spent not one single farthing, nor had done so since the payment in advance of three hundred and fifty pounds to Mrs. Wilmot for the education and dress of Agnes. In fact, the profits arising from the honey she sold, fully furnished all the cash she wanted; as her stipulated supplies from the farm amounted very nearly to all that her ascetic table required. . . . She used neither tea nor wine, milk supplying their place. . . . She had neither rent, taxes, nor servants, to pay; and her toilet, though neat to admiration, cost less than any lady would believe possible, who had not studied the enduring nature of stout and simple habiliments, when worn as Miss Compton wore them.

Such being the facts, it might be imagined that a schedule like the above would have appeared to such a possessor of such an income a sufficient guarantee against any possible pecuniary embarrassment from inviting one young girl to share it with her. But Miss Compton, as she sat in her secluded bower, had for years been looking out upon the fashionable world through the powerful, though somewhat distorting *lunette d'approche*, furnished by modern novels; and if she had acquired no other information thereby, she at least had learned to estimate with some tolerable degree of justness the difference between the expense of living in the world, and out of it.

“If I do adopt her, and make her wholly mine,” thought she, “it shall not be for the purpose of forming her into a rich country-town miss. . . . She shall be introduced into the world, . . . she shall improve whatever talents nature may have given her by lessons from the best masters; . . . her dress shall be that of a well-born woman of good fortune, and *she shall be waited upon as a gentlewoman ought to be. Can I do all this, and keep her a carriage besides, for fourteen*

hundred a-year? No!” was uttered aloud by the deeply meditative old lady. “What then was she to decide upon? Should she wait for two more years before she declared her intentions, and by aid of the farther sum thus saved enable herself to reach the point she aimed at?” Something that she took for prudence very nearly answered “*yes*,” but was checked by a burst of contrary feeling that again found vent in words,—“And while I am saving hundreds of pounds, may she not be acquiring thousands of vulgar habits that may again quench all my hopes? No; it shall be done at once.” So at length she laid her head on her pillow, resolved to take her heiress immediately under her own protection (provided always that the examination which was to take place on the morrow should not prove that the Wisett style of beauty was unbearably predominant,) and that having arranged with her honest tenant some fair equivalent for her profitable apiary, her lodgings, and her present allowances, she should take her at once to London, devote one year to the completion of her education, and leave it to fate and fortune to decide what manner of life they should afterwards pursue.

For a little rustic old woman who had never in her life travelled beyond the county town of her native shire, this plan was by no means ill concocted, and must, I think, display very satisfactorily to all unprejudiced eyes the great advantages to be derived from a long and diligent course of novel-reading, as, without it, Miss Compton would, most assuredly, never have discovered that fourteen hundred a-year was insufficient to supply the expenses of herself and her young niece.

But, alas! All this wisdom was destined to be blighted in the bud.

Miss Compton was true to her appointment, and so was Mrs. Barnaby; the fair Agnes, too, failed not to make her appearance; and moreover the critical eyes of the old lady failed not to discover, at the very first glance, that no trace of Wisett vulgarity was there to lessen the effect of her exceeding loveliness. But all this was of no avail for the matter went in this wise.

The first who arrived of the parties expected by Mrs. Sims, was Joe Jacks the carpenter. His daughter Betty had given him such an account of the proposal made to her, as caused

him to be exceedingly anxious for its acceptance ; and he now came rather before the appointed time, in order to hint pretty plainly to Mrs. Sims that he should take it very ill, if she did not give a good word to help his troublesome Betty off his hands.

Then came Miss Compton, who walked straight through the school-room, and ensconced herself in the little parlour behind it, and in about ten minutes afterwards the stately Mrs. Barnaby and her graceful companion arrived also.

Mrs. Sims was by no means deficient in her manner of managing the little intrigue intrusted to her ; she waited very quietly till she perceived Mrs. Barnaby completely occupied in making the carpenter understand, that if she engaged to find shoes, shifts, and flannel petticoats for his daughter, as well as all her finery, the wages could not be more than two pounds and then she laid a gentle hand on Agnes, who, not being particularly interested in the discussion, suffered herself to be abducted without resistance, and in the next moment found herself in the presence of Miss Compton.

The young girl knew her in a moment, for she had made a deep impression on her memory, both by her kindness at one period, and her capricious want of it at another. But far different was the effect of memory in the old lady ; for not only was she unable to recognise in the figure before her the Agnes of her recollection, or rather of her fancy, but it was not immediately that she could be made to believe in the identity.

“ You do not mean to tell me, Mrs. Sims, that this young lady is Agnes Willoughby ? ” said she, rising up, and really trembling from agitation.

“ Dear me, yes, Miss Compton, to be sure it is. ”

“ Do you not know me, dear aunt ? ” said Agnes, approaching her, and timidly holding out her hand.

“ Your aunt ? . . . am I really your aunt ? . . . Is it possible that you are my poor brother’s grandchild ? ”

“ I am Agnes Willoughby, ” replied the young girl, puzzled and almost frightened by the doubts and the agitation she witnessed.

“ If you are ! ” exclaimed Miss Compton, suddenly embracing her, “ I am a more guilty creature than I ever thought to be ! ”

At this moment, and while the arms of the diminutive spinster were still twined round the person of Agnes, who had just decided in her own mind that her great-aunt was the most unintelligible person in the world, the door of the little parlour opened with a jerk that showed it yielded to no weak hand, and the full-blown person of the widow Barnaby stood before them. Her eyes and her rouge were as bright as ever, and her sober cap and sable draperies vainly, as it should seem, endeavoured to soften those peculiarities of the Wisett aspect against which Miss Compton had sworn eternal hatred, for never had she appeared more detestable; her usual bravura manner indeed was somewhat exaggerated by her indignation at the concealment which had been attempted, and which had been adroitly pointed out to her by the sharp-witted Betty Jacks.

"Soh! . . . you thought I should not find you out, I suppose!" she exclaimed, as she shut the door behind her.

"God give me patience!" cried the irritated recluse, suddenly disengaging herself from Agnes. "This is strange persecution, Mrs. Barnaby," and as she spoke she endeavoured to effect her retreat. But this could not be done in a straight direction, inasmuch as it required a considerable circuit safely to weather either side of the expansive widow; and before Miss Compton reached the door, that lady had so established herself before it as to render her leaving the room without permission absolutely impossible.

The time had been, when the hope of "getting something out of the little hunch-back" would have enabled Mrs. Barnaby to put a very strong restraint upon any feeling likely to offend her, but this was over. She thought her turn was come now, and considered her own revenues and her own position as so immeasurably superior to those of the little "old woman clothed in grey" who stood shaking before her, that her pride would never have forgiven her avarice had it led her to neglect this favourable opportunity of displaying some of the contempt and scorn which she had felt she had heretofore received from her.

"Upon my word, Miss Compton," she began, "I do really wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, to come visiting this vulgar body Mrs. Sims, instead of profiting by the notice of your own relations, which might do you honour. And your

dress, Miss Compton! . . . What must my niece, Miss Wil-
loughby, think, at seeing the sister of her own grandfather
going about in such a horrid, coarse, miserable stuff gown as
that? We all know how you have been squandering your
little property upon the beggars you get to flatter you, but
that is no reason for behaving as you do towards me. My
excellent husband has left me in circumstances of such
affluence as might enable me to assist you by the gift of some
of my own clothes, if you conducted yourself as you ought
to do."

This harangue would probably have been cut short, had
Miss Compton retained breath enough to articulate; but
astonishment and indignation almost choked her: instead of
speaking, she stood still and panted, till Agnes, inexpressibly
shocked and terrified, moved a chair towards her, and entreated
her to sit down. Her only reply, however, was rudely pushing
Agnes and her chair aside, and then with a sort of desperate
effort, exclaiming, —

"Woman! . . . Let me pass!"

"Oh! yes — you may pass and welcome," said Mrs. Bar-
naby, standing aside. — "You have behaved to me from first
to last more like a fiend than an aunt, and I certainly shall not
break my heart if I never set my eyes on you again. Come,
Agnes, my love, I have concluded my business in this musty-
smelling place, and now let us be gone. . . . Don't stand fawn-
ing upon her . . . I promise you it will be all in vain. . . .
You will get nothing by it, my dear."

Distressed beyond measure at this painful scene, and not
well knowing how to express the strong feeling which drew
her to the side of Miss Compton, Agnes stood timidly uncer-
tain what she ought to do, when Mrs. Barnaby's authori-
tative voice again uttered, "Come, my dear Agnes, I am
impatient to take you away from what I consider so very dis-
graceful a meeting."

Thus painfully obliged to decide upon either taking leave of
her older relative, or of departing without it, Agnes turned
again towards Miss Compton, and silently bending down,
offered to kiss her cheek. But the angry old lady started away
from her, saying, — "None of that, if you please! — No
fawning upon me. You are her 'dear love,' and her 'dear
Agnes,' . . . and none such shall ever be graced or disgraced!

by me!" And thus saying, she walked past the tittering Mrs. Barnaby, and out of the house; preferring the chance of toiling two miles to reach her home, rather than endure another moment passed under the same roof with her.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. BARNABY SETS FORTH ON HER TRAVELS. — THE READER TAKES LEAVE OF MISS COMPTON. — MRS. BARNABY ENJOYS HER JOURNEY, AND ARRIVES SAFELY AT EXETER.

WITHIN a week after this unfortunate interview, all Mrs. Barnaby's earthly possessions, excepting her money, were deposited in the waggon that travelled between Silverton and Exeter; and the day afterwards herself, her niece, and her maid, whom she had surnamed Jerningham, (the two former in the coach, and the latter on the top of it,) set forth on their way to that fair and ancient city of the west.

Before we follow them thither, we must stop for a moment to bid a long adieu to poor Miss Compton. Unfortunately for her temper, as well as her limbs, farmer Wright did not overtake her till within a few yards of their home; and the agitation and fatigue, both equally unusual to her, so completely overpowered her strength and spirits, that having taken to her bed as soon as she reached her room, she remained in it for above a fortnight, being really feverish and unwell, but believing herself very much worse than she really was. During the whole of this time, and indeed for several months afterwards, she never attempted to separate the innocent image of Agnes from the offensive one of Mrs. Barnaby. The caress which the poor girl had offered with such true tenderness and sympathy, was the only distinct idea respecting her that remained on the mind of Miss Compton; and this suggested no feeling but that of indignation, from the conviction that Mrs. Barnaby's "dear love," not a whit less detestable, was only more artful than herself; or that, not yet being in possession of the wealth of which her hateful protectress boasted, she deemed it prudent to aim at obtaining whatever she herself might have to bestow.

Notwithstanding all these disagreeable imaginings, however,

the old lady gradually recovered both her health and her usual tranquil equality of spirits, sometimes even persuading herself that she was very glad she had not been seduced, by the appearance of Agnes, to sacrifice her own comfort for the advantage of an artful girl, who was, after all, quite as much the granddaughter of a Wisett as of a Compton.

* * * * *

Never during the prosperous years that Mrs. Barnaby had been the mistress of her comfortable house at Silverton, (excepting, perhaps, for the delightful interval while she was treated throughout the town as a bride,) did she feel half so grand or so happy a personage as now that she had no house at all. There was an elegance and freedom, which she never felt conscious of before, in thus setting off upon her travels with what she believed to be an ample purse, of which she was the uncontrolled mistress, a beautiful niece to chaperone, and a lady's maid to wait upon her; and had Agnes, who sat opposite to her, been less earnestly occupied in recalling all the circumstances of her last strange interview with her aunt Compton, she must have observed and been greatly puzzled by the series of (perhaps) involuntary grimaces which accompanied Mrs. Barnaby's mental review of her own situation.

"A rich and handsome widow! . . . Could fate have possibly placed her in any situation she should have liked so well?" This was the question she silently asked herself, and cordially did her heart answer, "No."

As these thoughts worked in her mind, her dark, well-marked eyebrows raised themselves, her eyes flashed, and her lips curled into a triumphant smile.

The person who occupied the transverse corner to herself was a handsome young man, who had joined the Silverton coach, from the mansion of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, to which, however, he was himself quite a stranger; and having in vain tried to get sight of the features concealed by the long crape veil beside him, he took to watching those no way concealed by the short crape veil opposite.

"Mother and daughter, of course," thought he. "A young specimen, without rouge or moustache, would not be amiss."

Mrs. Barnaby perceived he was looking at her, and settled her features into dignified but not austere harmony.

"*It is very pleasant travelling this morning, ma'am;*" said the young man.

belongings for a long time afterwards. This gentleman, whose intentions for the journey she greatly wished to conciliate, had addressed her in the easy style by which "fast" young men are apt to believe they can propitiate the favour of every woman somewhat under fifty years of age, and somewhat, too, beneath themselves in condition. Our traveller had no fear of blundering when he settled that Mrs. Barnaby belonged to this class; but the instant he caught a glimpse of the countenance of Agnes, he became equally sure that she at least belonged to a higher one. It was not wonderful that poor Miss Compton doubted, when she looked at her, the possibility of her being a descendant of the buxom Martha Wisett, for, excepting something in the form and soft lustre of her dark-brown eyes, her features bore no resemblance to her mother, or her mother's family, but a most decided one to that of her father, who, though a very foolish, hot-headed lieutenant, when we made his acquaintance, was descended from a race of aristocratic ancestors, rather remarkable for their noble and regular cast of features, which appeared indeed to be their least alienable birthright.

The traveller, though a young man, had lived sufficiently in the world to have learned at least the alphabet of character as written on the countenances of those he met, and he spelt gentlewoman so plainly on that of Agnes, that he felt no more right to address her without introduction than he would have done had the stage-coach been an opera-box.

"That's very odd," thought Mrs. Barnaby. "She certainly is a most beautiful creature quite as handsome as I was even in poor dear Tate's days, and yet the moment he got a sight of her, his pleasant, gay manner, changed all at once, and he now looks as glum as a boy at school. . . . Though she is my niece, she is not like me, that's certain; and who knows but that many men may still prefer my style to hers? As to this one, at least, it is impossible to doubt, and it will be great folly in me to set out with a fancy that my face and figure, especially when I get back to dress again, will not stand a comparison with hers. For some years, at any rate, in justice to myself, I will keep this in mind; and not to let it for granted that every glance directed towards us is for the child, and not for the woman."

able idea seemed all that was wanting to make the

journey perfectly delicious, and not even the continued reserve of the young man could affect in any great degree the charming harmony of her spirits. We hear much of the beautiful freshness of hope in young hearts just about to make their first trial of the joys of life ; but it is quite a mistake to suppose that any such feeling can equal the fearless, confident, triumphant mastery and command of future enjoyment, which dilates the heart, in the case of such an out-coming widow as Mrs. Barnaby.

The Silverton coach set its passengers down at Street's Hotel, in the Church-yard ; and my heroine, who now for the first time in her life found herself at an inn, with the power of ordering what she chose, determined to enjoy the two-fold gratification of passing for a lady of great fashion and fortune, and of taking especial care of her creature-comforts into the bargain.

" Do you want rooms, ma'am ? " said the head of a waiter, suddenly placing itself among the insides.

" Yes, young man, I want the best rooms in the house. . . . Where is my maid ? — Let her be ready to attend me as soon as I get out. We have nothing with us but three trunks, one square box, one hat-box, two carpet-bags, and my dressing-case. Let every thing be conveyed to my apartments. Now open the door, and let me get out. . . . Follow me, Agnes. . . . You will come, if you please, without delay, young man, to receive my orders respecting refreshments."

Two lighted candles were snatched up as they passed the bar, and Mrs. Barnaby proceeded up the stairs in state, the waiter and his candles before, Agnes and "*my maid*" behind.

" This room is extremely dark and disagreeable. . . . Pray, send the master of the house to me ; I wish to give my orders to him."

" My master is not at home, ma'am."

" Not at home ? Extremely negligent, I must say. Perhaps it will be better for me to proceed to some other hotel, where I may be able to see the head of the establishment. I have not been accustomed to be treated with any thing like neglect people of my condition, indeed, seldom are."

" If you will be pleased, my lady, to give your orders to me," said the waiter very respectfully, " you shall find nothing wanting that belongs to a first-rate house."

"Then, pray, send my maid to me. . . . Oh! there you are, Jerningham."

"Yes, ma'am," answered the gawky soubrette, tucking back the veil with which Mrs. Barnaby had adorned one of her own bonnets, and staring at the draperied windows, and all the other fine things which met her eyes.

"You will see, Jerningham, that my sleeping apartment is endurable."

Now Betty Jacks, though careless and idle, was by no means a stupid girl; but she was but fifteen years old, and her experiences not having hitherto been upon a very extended scale, she found herself at a loss to understand what her new mistress meant, about nine times out of every ten that she spoke to her. On receiving the order above mentioned, she meditated for an instant upon what an "endurable sleeping apartment" might be; but the sagacity which failed to discover this, sufficed to suggest the advantage of not confessing her ignorance; and she answered boldly, "Yes, sure, ma'am."

"Go, then," said the lady, languidly throwing her person upon a sofa; and then turning to the waiter, who still remained with the door in his hand, she pronounced with impressive emphasis,—

"Let there be tea, sugar, and cream brought, with buttered toast, and muffins also, if it be possible. . . . Agnes, my love, I am afraid there is hardly room for you on the sofa; but sit down, dear, and try to make yourself comfortable on a chair."

The two ladies were now left to themselves, Betty Jacks joyfully accompanying the smart young waiter to the regions below. "And who may be your missus, my dear?" he said, giving her an encouraging chuck under the chin; "she can't have much to do, I'm thinking, with any of the county families, for they bean't much given to stage-coaches, and never without their own gentlemen to guard 'em. . . . Is she a real grand lady, or only a strutting make-believe?"

Betty, thinking it much more for her own credit to serve a real grand lady than a make-believe, readily answered,—

"To be sure, she is a real grand lady, Mr. Imperdence. . . . We comes up along from Silverton, and she's one of the finest ladies in the town."

"*In the town,*" repeated the knowing waiter significantly. . . . "I understand. . . . Well, she shall have some tea;

... And now my girl, you had better go and do what she bid you."

"Well now, if I hav'n't downright forgot already!" said the unblushing Betty. "Will you tell me what it was then?"

"How old are you, my dear?" was the unsatisfactory reply.

"And pray what's that to you? . . . But come now, do tell me, will y', what was it missus told me to do?"

"To go see after her bed, my dear, and all that, and unpack her nightcap, I suppose."

"Well, then, give me a candle,—that's a good man. . . . But where is her bed, though?"

"You bean't quite hatched yet, my gay maypole, but you'll do well enough some of these days. . . . Here, Susan! show this young waiting-maid a bed-room for two ladies—and one for yourself too, I suppose, my dear. I shouldn't wonder, Susan, if it was possible the grand lady up stairs may pay less than a duchess; but, take my word for it she'll blow you sky high, if you don't serve her as if you thought she was one."

"How did she come?" snappishly inquired the chambermaid.

"By the Royal Regulator," answered the waiter. "But inside, Susan, inside, you know, and with her lady's maid here to wait upon her; so mind what you're about, I tell you."

"Come this way, young woman, if you please," said the experienced official, who was not to be bullied out of a first-floor room by the report of duchess-like airs, or the sight of a lanky child for a waiting-maid. So Betty was made to mount to a proper stage-coach elevation.

Mrs. Barnaby, however, got her tea, and her toast, and her muffins, greatly to her satisfaction, even though the master of the establishment knew nothing about it; and though she did make Agnes's slender arm pay for the second flight of stairs, in order to prove how very little used she was to such fatigue, she was, on the whole, well pleased with her room when she reached it, well pleased with her bed, well pleased with her breakfast, and ready to set off as soon as it was over to look out for *lodgings and adventures*.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TO CHOOSE LODGINGS. — REASONS FOR LAYING ASIDE WIDOW'S WEEDS. — LADY-LIKE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. — AFFECTIONATE FORETHOUGHT. — CHARMING SENSIBILITY. — GENEROUS INTENTIONS. — A CLEVER LETTER, BUT ONE UPON WHICH DOCTORS MAY DISAGREE.

OF lodgings Mrs. Barnaby saw enough to offer a most satisfactory selection, and heartily to weary Agnes, who followed her up and down innumerable stairs, and stood behind her, during what seemed endless colloquies with a multitude of respectable-looking landladies, long after she had flattered herself that her aunt must have been suited to her heart's desire by what she had already seen. Of adventures, the quiet streets of Exeter were not likely to produce many; but the widow had the satisfaction of observing that lounging gentlemen were abundant, a cavalry officer still visible now and then, and that hardly one man in ten of any class passed her without staring her full in the face.

At length, after having walked about till she was sufficiently tired herself, and till poor Agnes looked extremely pale, she entered a pastry-cook's shop for the purpose of eating buns, and of taking into deliberate consideration whether she should secure apartments in the Crescent, which were particularly comfortable, or some she had seen in the High Street, which were particularly gay.

Mrs. Barnaby often spoke aloud to herself while appearing to address her niece, and so she did now.

"That's a monstrous pretty drawing-room, certainly; and if I was sure that I should be able to get any company to come and see me, I'd stick to the Crescent. . . . But it's likely enough that I shall find nobody to know, and in that case it would be most horribly dull. . . . But if we did not get a soul from Monday morning to Saturday night, we could never be dull in the High Street. Such lots of country gentlemen! . . . And they always look about them more than any other men!" And then, suddenly addressing her niece in good earnest, she added, —

"Don't you think so, Agnes?"

"I don't know, ma'am," replied Agnes, in an accent that would have delighted her aunt Compton, and which might have offended some sort of aunts; but it only amused her aunt Barnaby, who laughed heartily, and said, for the benefit of the young woman who presided at the counter, as well as for that of her niece, —

"Yes, my dear, that's quite right; that's the way we all begin. . . . And you will know all, how and about it, too, long and long before you will own it."

Agnes suddenly thought of Empton parsonage, its pretty lawn, its flowers its books, and its gentle intellectual inmates, and involuntarily she closed her eyes for a moment and sighed profoundly; but the reverie was not permitted to last long, for Mrs. Barnaby, having finished her laugh and her bun, rose from her chair, saying, —

"Come along, child! . . . the High Street will suit us best, wo'n't it, Agnes?"

"You must best know what you best like, aunt," replied the poor girl almost in a whisper; "but the Crescent seemed to me very quiet and agreeable."

"Quiet! . . . Yes, I should think so! . . . And if that's your fancy, it is rather lucky that it's my business to choose, and not yours. And it's my business to pay too. . . . It's just sixpence," she added with a laugh, and pulling out her purse. "One bun for the young lady, and five for me. Come along, Agnes . . . and do throw back that thick crape veil, child. . . . Your bonnet will look as well again!"

* * * * *

Another half hour settled the situation of their lodgings in Exeter. Smart Mrs. Tompkins's first-floor in the High Street, with a bed in the garret for Jerningham, was secured for three months; at the end of which time Mrs. Barnaby was secretly determined as nearly as possible to lay aside her mourning, and come forth with the apple blossoms, dazzling in freshness, and *couleur de rose*. The bargain for the lodgings, however, was not concluded without some little difficulty, for Mrs. Tompkins, who owned that she considered herself as the most respectable lodging-house keeper in Exeter, did not receive this second and conclusive visit from the elegant widow with as *much apparent satisfaction* as was expected.

"Here I am again, Mrs. Tompkins!" said the lively lady

in crape and bombasin. "I can see no lodgings I like as well as yours, after all."

"Well . . . I don't know, ma'am, about that," replied the cautious Mrs. Tompkins; "but, to say the truth, I'm not over and above fond of lady lodgers . . . they give a deal more trouble than gentlemen, and I've always been used to have the officers as long as there were any to be had; and even now, with only three cavalry companies in the barracks, it's a rare chance to find me without them."

"But as you do happen to be without them now, Mrs. Tompkins, and as your bill is up, I suppose your lodgings are to let, and I am willing to take them."

"And may I beg the favour of your name, ma'am?" said the respectable landlady, stiffly.

"Barnaby!" answered the widow, with an emphasis that gave much dignity to the name. "I am the widow of a gentleman of large fortune in the neighbourhood of Silvertown, and, finding the scene of my lost happiness too oppressive to my spirits, I am come to Exeter with my niece, and only one lady's maid to wait upon us both, that I may quietly pass a few months in comparative retirement before I join my family and friends in the country, as their rank and fortune naturally lead them into more gaiety than I should at present like to share. I am not much accustomed to be called upon thus to give an account of myself; but this is my name, and this is my station; and if neither happens to satisfy you, I must seek lodgings elsewhere."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Tompkins, considerably awed by this imposing statement, "but in our line it is quite necessary; and real ladies, as I dare say you are, are always served the better for being known. At what inn is your lady's maid and your luggage put up, ma'am?"

"At Street's Hotel, Mrs. Tompkins; and if we agree about the apartments, I shall go there, pay my bill, and return directly. You have flies here, I think, have you not? . . . I have no carriage with me."

"Yes, ma'am, we have flies, and none better; but if it's only for the luggage, a porter would do better, and 'tis but a step to walk."

The bargain was then concluded, the ladies returned to the

hotel, and, after a short struggle in the heart of the widow between economy and her rather particular love of a comfortable dinner, she decided upon an early broiled chicken and mushrooms before her removal, in preference to a doubtful sort of mutton-chop after it. But at seven o'clock the two ladies were seated at tea in the drawing-room, the lady's maid having been initiated by the factotum of the house into all the mysteries of the neighbouring "shop for every thing," and performing her first act of confidential service very much to the satisfaction of her mistress, who could not wonder that a city like Exeter should be dearer than such a little out-of-the-way place as Silvertown.

Mrs. Barnaby knew not a single soul in Exeter, and she lay in bed on the following morning for a full hour later than usual, ruminating on the possibilities of making acquaintance with somebody who might serve as a wedge by which she might effect an entry into the society to be found there. Once seen and known, she felt confident that no difficulty would remain, but the first step was not an easy one.

She doubted not, indeed, that she might easily enough have obtained some introductions from among her acquaintance at Silvertown, but it was no part of her plans to make her *entrée* into the *beau monde*, even of Exeter, as the widow of an apothecary. "No!" thought she, as she turned herself by a vigorous movement from one side of the bed to the other, "I will carve out my own fortune without any Silvertown introductions whatever! I know that I have a head of my own, as well as a face, and when once I have got rid of this nasty gown and that hideous cap, we shall see what can be done."

Walking up and down the High Street, however, which formed nearly her only occupation during all the hours of light, was, she soon found, the only gaiety she could hope for, and it proved a source of mingled joy and woe. To see so many smart people, and so many beautiful bonnets, was an enchantment that made her feel as if she had got to the gates of Paradise; but the impossibility of speaking to the smart people, or wearing the beautiful bonnets, soon turned all the pleasure into bitterness, and she became immeasurably impatient to cure at least one of these miseries, by throwing aside her hated weeds. To do this, soon became, as she said, necessary to her existence; and her landlady at last turned out to be a

perfect treasure, from the sympathy and assistance she afforded her in the accomplishment of her wishes.

Mrs. Tompkins had speedily discovered both that her lodger really had money, and that the gentleman of large fortune whom she had lost was the apothecary of Silverton. The respect obtained by the first quite obliterated, in Mrs. Tompkins' eyes, any contempt that might have been generated by the falsehoods which the second brought to light, and on the whole nothing could be more friendly than their intercourse.

"There can be no use, Mrs. Tompkins," said the doleful widow, "do you think there can . . . in my going on wearing this dismal dress, that almost breaks my heart every time I look at myself? . . . It is very nearly six months now since my dear Mr. Barnaby died, and I believe people of fashion never wear first mourning longer."

Mr. Barnaby, however, had been alive and well exactly three months after the period named by his widow as that of his death; and that, too, Mrs. Tompkins knew as well as she did; but Mrs. Tompkins' sister was a milliner, and family affection being stronger within her than any abstract love of propriety, she decidedly voted for laying aside the weeds immediately, there being "no yearthly good," as she well observed, "in any woman's going on breaking her heart by looking at herself in the glass." So the sister was sent for, and after a long consultation in the widow's bed-room, it was decided that the following Sunday should send her to the cathedral in a black satin dress, with lavender-coloured bonnet, fichu, gloves, reticule, and so forth.

Considering the complete dependence of Agnes, and the great aptitude of such a disposition as that of Mrs. Barnaby to keep this ever in her mind, she certainly felt a greater degree of embarrassment at the idea of communicating this resolution to her than might have been expected. Her friends might fairly have drawn an inference considerably in her favour from this, . . . namely, that she was ashamed of it. But however respectable its cause, the feeling was not strong enough to offer any effectual impediment to her purpose, and she came forth from the council-chamber where this great measure had been decided on, wishing, for the moment at least, that Agnes was *at the bottom of the sea*, but firm in her determination to wa-

nounce to her the important resolution she had taken, without a moment's further delay.

"I don't know how it is, my dear Agnes," said she, after seating herself, and looking steadfastly at her niece for a minute or two; "but though I don't dislike to see you in deep mourning, the sight of it on myself makes me perfectly wretched! . . . Why should I go on making my poor heart ache, for no reason upon earth that I know of, but because, when people happen to be where they are known by every body, it is customary to wear a certain dress for a certain number of days and weeks; but, thank Heaven! Agnes, there is not a single soul in all Exeter that knows me, and I really think there is something very like a rebellion against Providence in refusing to take advantage of this lucky circumstance, which doubtless the mercy of Heaven has arranged on purpose, so as to enable me to spare myself without impropriety. It is easy enough, Agnes, for ordinary-minded women to wear, for a whole year together, a dress that must remind them every instant of the most dreadful loss a woman can sustain! — it is easy enough for others, but it will not do for me! And in justice to myself, and indeed to you too, Agnes, I am determined to make the effort at once, and discard a garb that breaks my poor heart every time I cast my eyes on any part of it. You must, of course, perceive that it is not for myself alone, my dear child, that I make this effort to restore the health and spirits with which nature has hitherto so bountifully blessed me; . . . it is indeed chiefly for you, Agnes! . . . it is for your sake, my dear, that I am determined, as far as in me lies, to stop the sorrow that is eating into my very vitals. . . . But never be unjust to me, Agnes! Whenever you see me shaking off the gloom of my widowed condition, remember it is solely owing to my love for you. . . . Remember this with gratitude, Agnes, and, for the sake of truth, let others know it too, whenever you have an opportunity of alluding to it."

And now again did young Agnes doubt her power of answering with propriety. The principle of truth was strong within her, and to have expressed either sympathy or gratitude would have been an outrage to this principle, which would have *made her hate herself*. . . . she could not, she would not do

it; and in reply to her aunt's harangue, who seemed to wait for her answer, she only said, —

“The dress of a widow is indeed very sad to look upon; no one can doubt that, aunt Barnaby.”

“Good Heaven! . . . then *you* also suffer from the sight of it, my poor child! . . . Poor dear Agnes! I ought to have thought of this before; . . . but I will wound your young heart no longer. This week shall end a suffering so heavy, and so unnecessary for us both, and I trust you will never forget what you owe me. And yet, my dear, though I hope and believe I shall be sustained, and find myself capable of making this effort respecting my own dress, there is a tender weakness still struggling at my heart, Agnes, which would make it very painful to me were I immediately to see you change yours. Do you feel any repugnance, my dear girl, to wearing that deep mourning for your poor uncle for some months longer?”

Agnes now felt no difficulty whatever in answering as she was expected to do, and very eagerly replied, “Oh! dear no, aunt . . . none in the least.”

“I rejoice,” said the widow, solemnly, “to perceive in you, young as you are, Agnes, feelings so perfectly what they ought to be; . . . you would spare me suffering from sadness too profound, yet would you, my child, in all things not injurious to me, desire to testify your deep respect for the invaluable being we have lost. This is exactly what I would wish to see, and I trust you will ever retain a disposition so calculated to make me love you. But look not so sad, my love! . . . I really must invent some occupation to cheer and amuse you, Agnes. . . . Let me see . . . what say you, dearest, to running some edging for me on a tulle border for my *tour de bonnet*?”

* * * * *

The widow faithfully kept her kind promise to Agnes, and never again (excepting for a short interval that will be mentioned hereafter) did she run the risk of grieving any heart by the sight of deep mourning for her lost Barnaby, for though she restrained herself for some time longer within the sober dignity of black satins and silks as the material of her robes, there was no colour of the rainbow that did not by degrees find its way amidst her trimmings and decorations. During this period all the hours not devoted to the displaying her

recovered finery in church or street, were employed in converting cheap muslin into rich embroidery, and labouring to make squares of Scotch cambric assume the appearance of genuine *batiste*, rich with the delicate labours of Moravian needles.

It was a great happiness for Agnes that satin-stitch had never ranked as a necessary branch of female education at Empton Rectory; had she been able to embroider muslin, her existence would have been dreadful, far, beyond all question, few of her waking hours would have been employed upon any thing else; one of Mrs. Barnaby's favourite axioms being, that "there is nothing which makes so prodigious a difference in a lady's dress, as her wearing a great profusion of good work!" . . . So a great profusion of good work she was quite determined to wear, and deep was her indignation at the culpable negligence of Mrs. Wilnot, upon finding that an accomplishment "so particularly lady-like, and so very useful," had been utterly neglected.

To invent an occupation for herself during the hours thus employed by her aunt, soon became the subject of all Agnes's meditations. She knew that it must be something that should not annoy or inconvenience Mrs. Barnaby in the slightest degree, and it was this knowledge, perhaps, which made her too discreet to ask for the hire of a piano-forte, for which, nevertheless, she longed, very much like a hart for the water brook; for the musical propensities of her father and mother had descended to her, and of all the pleasures she had yet tasted, that derived from her study and practice of music had been the greatest. But that her aunt should pay money for no other purpose than for her to amuse herself by making a noise in their only sitting-room, was quite out of the question. So the piano she mentally abandoned for ever; but there were other studies that she had pursued at Empton, which, if permitted to renew, even without the aid of any master, would greatly embellish an existence, which the poor girl often felt to be as heavy a gift as could well have been bestowed upon a mortal. Having at length decided what it was she would ask for, she took courage, hemmed twice, and then said, —

"Should you have any objection, aunt, to my endeavouring by myself to go on with my French and Italian, while you are at work? . . . I am sometimes afraid that I shall forget all I have learned."

"I am sure I hope not, and it will be very stupid, and very wicked of you, Agnes, if you do. Your teaching is all we ever got out of that hunch-backed Jezebel of an aunt; and you must always recollect, you know, that it is very possible you may have to look to this as your only means of support. I am sure I am excessively fond of you, I may say passionately attached to you, it is quite impossible you can ever deny that; but yet we must neither of us ever forget that it is likely enough I may marry again, and have a family; and in that case, my dear, much as I love you (and my disposition is uncommonly affectionate), it will be my bounden duty to think of my husband and children, which would probably make it necessary for you to go out as a governess or teacher at a school."

"I understand that very well, aunt," replied Agnes, greatly comforted by the prospect thus held out, "and that is a great additional reason for my endeavouring to render myself fit to undertake such a situation. I was getting on very well at Empton. Will you be so very kind as to let me try to get on by myself here?"

"Certainly, Agnes. . . . I shall wish to encourage your laudable endeavours; . . . but I must say it was a most abominable shame in that Mrs. Wilmet not to teach you *saitn-stitch*, which, after all, is the only really lady-like way in which a young woman can assist in maintaining herself. Just look at this collar, Agnes; . . . the muslin did not cost sixpence . . . certainly not more than sixpence, and I'd venture to say that I could not get the fellow of it in any shop in Exeter for two guineas. . . . It is long before French, or Italian either, will bring such a per-centage as that. . . . Now listen to me, Agnes, before you set to, upon your stupid books again. . . . I'll tell you what I am willing to do for you. I hate teaching too much to attempt instructing you myself, but I will pay a woman to come here to give you lessons, if you will tell me truly and sincerely that you shall be able to learn it, and to stick to it. I am so fond of you, Agnes, so particularly fond of you, that I should not at all mind keeping you on, even when I am married, if you will take fairly and honestly to this elegant and lady-like employment, . . . for I should never have any difficulty, I dare say, in disposing of what you did, beyond what I might want

for myself and children—that is, provided you bring yourself to work in this sort of perfectly elegant style. What d’ye say to it, Agnes?”

“You are very kind, aunt,” replied the terrified girl, blushing violently, “but indeed, indeed, I am afraid, that as I have never begun yet, I should find it quite impossible to bring my stubborn fingers to work as yours do. I never was particularly clever in learning to work, I believe, and what you do is so very nice that I could never hope to do any thing like it.”

“Perhaps you are right, my dear, . . . it is not every woman whose fingers can move as mine do,” replied Mrs. Barnaby, looking down complacently at the mincing paces of her needle; . . . “but your hands are not clumsy, Agnes, rather the contrary, I must say; and I can’t but think, child, that if you were to set-to with hearty good-will, and practise morning, noon, and night, it is very likely you might learn enough, after a year or two of constant pains-taking, to enable you to give up all your wearisome books at once and for ever. That is worth thinking of twice, I promise you.”

“Indeed, indeed, dear aunt, I never should make any thing of it!” . . . exclaimed Agnes eagerly; “I am sure it is one of the things that people must begin early, . . . and I don’t at all dislike books, . . . and I would rather go out to teach, if you please, than work muslin, . . . for I am quite, quite sure that I never should do it well, no, not even decently.”

“So much the worse for you, child! . . . At any rate, I have done my duty by offering to have you taught: please to remember that.”

“And may I begin then, aunt, with my books?”

“And where are you to get books, Miss Agnes? . . . It is of no use to expect I can buy them, and that you will find . . . I see already that Silverton is no rule for the rest of the world as to expense, and that I shall have quite enough to do with my money without wasting it on trumpery; . . . so, pray, don’t look to my buying books for you, for most assuredly I shall do no such thing.”

“Oh no, aunt! . . . I do not think of it,—there is *not the least occasion* for such extravagance; you shall see *how well I am provided.*” And so saying, she ran out of the room, and in a few minutes returned with a small and very

neat mahogany box, which in travelling had been carefully covered by a leathern case, and which her aunt had suffered to accompany her unchallenged, because she presumed it to be the treasury of all "her best things;" a species of female property for which the widow had never-failing respect, even when it did not belong to herself, which was perhaps more than could be said respecting any other sort of property whatever.

Agnes brought this box in with difficulty, for though small, it was heavy, and when opened displayed to the somewhat surprised eyes of her aunt a collection of tiny volumes, so neatly fitting their receptacle, as to prove that they must have been made to suit each other.

"This was Mr. Wilmot's present to me, aunt," said Agnes, taking out a volume to exhibit its pretty binding. "Was it not kind of him?"

"It looks very extravagant, I think, for a man whose wife keeps school. . . . He must have been sadly puzzled to know what to do with his money."

"No, aunt, that was not the reason, for Mr. Wilmot is not extravagant at all; but he told me that aunt Betsy, instead of paying every half year, like other people, insisted upon giving him the five years' stipend for me, as well as the money for my clothes, all at once; and that he had always determined upon laying out the interest this sum had brought in a present for me. I think it was very generous of him."

"And what in the world have you got there, child? All grammars and spelling-books, I suppose; . . . but it's the most senseless quantity of school books that ever were got together for one person, I think. . . . I see no generosity in any thing so very silly."

"They are not school books, aunt, I assure you."

"Then what are they, pray? Why do you make such a mystery about it?"

"Oh! it's no mystery; . . . but I did not know. . . . I will read you the titles, if you please, aunt. Here are Shakspere, Milton, Spenser, and Gray; . . . these are all my English books."

"And what are these?"

"*Racine, Corneille, La Fontaine, and Boileau.*"

"*What useless trash! . . . And these?*"

"Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch; . . . and these six larger volumes are the 'componimenti lirici' of various authors."

"Oh goodness, child! . . . don't jabber your stupid school jargon to me. . . . There! . . . take them all away again; I can't very well see how they are to help you make a governess of yourself: grammars, I should think, and dictionaries, would be more to the purpose for that sort of profitable usefulness."

"And I have got them too, aunt, in my clothes-trunk; and if you will but be pleased to let me give my time to it, I am quite sure that I shall get on very well."

"Get on! . . . get on to what, child?"

"To reading both French and Italian with facility, . . . and perhaps to writing both with tolerable correctness."

"Well, . . . if it will enable you to get your bread one of these days, I am sure that I don't wish to hinder it,—so go to work as soon as you will,—only pray don't let me hear any more about it, for I quite hate the sort of thing,—though of course, my dear, if I was in your situation, I should know it was my duty to think differently. But those whom Providence has blessed with wealth, have a right to indulge their taste, . . . and my taste is altogether that of a lady."

From this time the aching void in the heart, and almost in the intellect of Agnes, seemed supplied. Her aunt, when she did not want her as a walking companion, suffered her to go on reading and scribbling to her heart's content, and the more readily, perhaps, from its giving her the air of being still a child learning lessons, which was exactly the footing on which she wished to keep her, if possible, for another year or two, as she was by no means insensible to the inconvenience of having a grown-up niece, while still in the pride of beauty herself.

In this manner the period allotted for their stay at Exeter wore away; Mrs. Barnaby's wardrobe, embroidery, and all, was quite ready for display; Betty Jacks, alias Jerningham, had learned to look exceedingly like a disreputable young woman, to run of errands, and to *won out* tumbled dresses; the bright sun of June had succeeded the lovely temperature of a Devonshire spring, and every thing seemed to invite the *adventurous widow* to a wider field of display. But before she made this onward movement from which she hoped so

much, it was necessary to apprise her sister-in-law, Mrs. Peters, of her affectionate intention of passing a few months at Clifton, in order to become acquainted with her and her family. The letter by which this intention was announced is too characteristic of my heroine to be omitted.

“MY DEAREST SISTER,

“Under the dreadful calamity that has fallen upon me, no idea has suggested the slightest glimpse of comfort to my widowed heart but the hope of becoming acquainted with my lost Barnaby’s sister! Beloved Margaret! . . . So let me call you, for so have I been used to hear you called by HIM! . . . Beloved Margaret! Let me hope that from you, and your charming family, I shall find the sympathy and affection I so greatly need.

“Your admirable brother . . . my lost but never-to-be-forgotten husband . . . was as successful as he deserved to be in the profession of which he was the highest ornament, and left an ample fortune,—the whole of which, as you know, he bequeathed to me with a confidence and liberality well befitting the perfect, the matchless love, which united us. But, alas! my sister, Providence denied us a pledge of this tender love, and where then can I so naturally look for the ultimate possessors of his noble fortune as amongst your family? I have one young niece, still almost a child, whom I shall bring with me to Clifton: But though I am passionately attached to her, my sense of justice is too strong to permit my ever suffering her claims to interfere with those more justly founded. When we become better acquainted, my dearest Margaret, you will find that this sense of what is right is the rule and guide of all my actions, and I trust you will feel it to be a proof of this, that my style and manner of living are greatly within my means. In fact, I never cease to remember, dear sister, that, though the widow of my poor Barnaby, I am the daughter of the well-born but most unfortunate clergyman of Silvertown, who was obliged to sell his long-descended estate in consequence of the treachery of a friend who ruined him. Thus, while the high blood which flows in my veins teaches me to do what is honourable, the unexpected poverty which fell upon my own family, makes me feel that there is more real dignity in living with economy

than in spending what my confiding husband left at my disposal, and thus putting it out of my power to increase it for the benefit of his natural heirs.

"This will, I hope, explain to you satisfactorily my not travelling with my own carriage, and my having no other retinue than one lady's maid. Alas! . . . it is not in pomp or parade that a truly widowed heart can find consolation!

"Let me hear from you, my dear sister, and have the kindness to tell me where you think I had better drive, on arriving at Clifton. With most affectionate love to Mr. Peters, and the blessing of a fond aunt to all your dear children, I remain, dearest Margaret,

"Your ever devoted sister,

"MARTHA BARNABY."

This letter was received by Mrs. Peters at the breakfast-table, round which were assembled three daughters, one son, and her husband. The lady read it through in silence, cast her eyes rapidly over it a second time, and then handed it over to her spouse with an air of some solemnity, though something very like a smile passed across her features at the same moment.

Mr. Peters also read the letter, but not like his lady, in silence.

"Very kind of her indeed! . . . Poor dear lady! . . . a true mourner, that's plain enough to be seen. . . . She must be an excellent good woman, my dear, this widow of poor Barnaby; and I'm heartily glad she is coming among us. Your aunt Barnaby's coming girls, and I hope you'll all behave so as to make her love you. . . . Is there any objection, Margaret, to the children's seeing this letter?"

"None at all," replied the lady. . . . "excepting . . ."

"Excepting what, my dear? . . . I am sure it is a letter that would do her honour any where, and I should be proud to read it on the exchange. . . . What do you mean by excepting?"

"It is no matter. . . . The girls and I can talk about it afterwards, . . . and James, I think, will understand it very clearly at once."

"Understand it? . . . to be sure he will. . . . I never read a better letter, or one more easily understood, in my life. — Here, James, read it aloud to your sisters."

The young man obeyed, and read it very demurely to the end, though, more than once, his laughing blue eye sent a glance to his mother that satisfied her she was right in her estimate of his acuteness.

"That's an aunt worth having, isn't it?" . . . said old Peters, standing up, and taking his favourite station on the hearth-rug, with his back to the grate, though no fire was in it. . . . "Now I hope we shall have no airs and graces, because she comes from a remote part of the country, but that you will one and all do your best to make her see that you are worthy of her favour."

"I will do all I can to show myself a dutiful and obedient nephew. . . . But don't you think, sir, that 'the lady doth protest too much?'"

"Oh! but she'll keep her word," . . . replied his mother, laughing.

"Keep her word? . . . to be sure she will, poor lady! She is broken-hearted and broken-spirited, as it's easy to see by her letter," observed the worthy Mr. Peters; "and I do hope, wife, that you will be very kind to her."

"And where shall I tell her to drive, Mr. Peters?"

"To the York Hotel, my dear, I should think."

"Do you know that I rather fancy she expects we should ask her to come here?"

"No! . . . Well, that did not strike me. Let me see the letter again. . . . But it's no matter; whether she does or does not, it may be quite as well to do it; . . . and she says she likes to save her money, poor thing."

The father and son then set off to walk to Bristol, and Mrs. Peters and her three daughters were left to sit in judgment on the letter, and then to answer it.

"I see what you think, mamma," said the eldest girl, as the door closed after them; "you have no faith in this widowed aunt's lachrymals?"

"Not so much, Mary, as I might have, perhaps, if she said less about her sorrows."

"And her generous intentions in our favour, mamma," . . . said the youngest, "perhaps you have no faith in them, either?"

"Not so much, Lucy," said the lady, repeating her words, "*as I might have, perhaps, if she said less about it.*"

"I hope you are deceived, all of you," said Elizabeth, the second girl, very solemnly; "and I must say I think it is very shocking to put such dreadful constructions upon the conduct of a person you know so little about."

"I am sure I put no constructions," replied Mary; "I only ventured to guess at mamma's."

"And I beg to declare that my sins against this generous new relative have gone no farther," said Lucy.

"Well, well, we shall see, girls," said the lively mother. "Let us all start fair for the loaves and fishes; . . . and now, Elizabeth, ring the bell, let the breakfast be removed, and you will see that I shall reply in a very sober and proper way to this pathetic communication."

The letter Mrs. Peters composed and read to her daughters was approved even by the sober-minded and conscientious Elizabeth; it contained an obliging offer of accommodation at their house in Rodney Place, till Mrs. Barnaby should have found lodgings to suit her, and ended with kind regards from all the family, and "*I beg you to believe me, your affectionate sister, Margaret Peters.*"

So far every thing prospered with our widow. This invitation was exactly what she wished, and having answered, accepted, and fixed the day and probable hour at which it was to begin, Mrs. Barnaby once more enjoyed the delight of preparing herself for a journey that was to lead her another step towards the goal she had in view.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ENTRÉE OF MRS. BARNABY IN MRS. PETERS'S DRAWING-ROOM. — FAMILY CONSULTATIONS. — ARRANGEMENTS FOR MISS WILLOUGHBY'S DRESS FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

IN one respect Mrs. Barnaby was considerably more fortunate than she had ventured to hope, for the "clothier," and the clothier's family, held a much higher station in society than she had anticipated. Mr. Peters had for many years been an active and prosperous manufacturer, neither above his business, ~~nor below~~ enjoying the ample fortune acquired by it; his wife was a lively, agreeable, lady-like woman, formed to be well

received by any society that the chances of commerce might have thrown her into, being sufficiently well educated and sufficiently gifted to do credit to the highest, and without any pretensions which might have caused her either to give or receive pain, had the chances been against her, and she had become the wife of a poor instead of a rich manufacturer. The eldest son, who was excellently well calculated to follow the steps of his lucky father, was already married and settled at Frome, with a share of the business of which he was now the most efficient support; the younger son, who was intended for the church, was at present at home for a few months previous to his commencing term-keeping at Oxford; and the three daughters, from appearance, education, and manners, were perfectly well qualified to fill the situation of first-rate belles in the Clifton ball-room. Their house and its furniture, their carriage and establishment, were all equally beyond the widow's expectations, so that, in short, a very agreeable surpris awaited her arrival at Clifton.

It was a lovely evening of the last week in June, that a Bristol hackney-coach deposited Mrs. Barnaby, her niece, her Jerninghams, and her trunks, at No. 4. Rodney Place. The ladies of the Peters's family had just left the dinner-table, and were awaiting their relative in the drawing-room. Let it not be supposed that the interesting widow made her *entrée* among them in the dress she had indulged in during her residence at Exeter; she was not so thoughtless; and so well had poor Agnes already learned to know her, that she felt little surprise when she saw her, the day before they left that city, draw forth every melancholy article that she had discarded, and heard her say, —

“ My life passes, Agnes, in a constant watchfulness of the feelings of others. . . . It was for your sake, dear girl, that I so early put off this sad attire, and the fear of wounding the feelings of my dear sister-in-law now induces me to resume it, for a few days at least, that she may feel I come to find my first consolation from her !”

So the next morning Mrs. Barnaby stepped into the stage-coach that was to convey her to Bristol, with her lilacs, her greys, and her pink whites all carefully shrouded from sight, in hand-boxes, and herself a perfect model of conjugal woe.

“ Show me to my sister !” said the widow, as soon as she

had counted all her own packages ; and with a cambric handkerchief, without an atom of embroidery, in her hand, her voice ready to falter, her knees to tremble, and her tears to flow, she followed the servant up stairs.

Mrs. Peters came very decorously forward to meet her, but she was, perhaps, hardly prepared for the very long embrace in which her unknown sister held her. Mrs. Peters was a very little woman, and was almost lost to sight in the arms and the draperies of the widow ; but when at last she was permitted to emerge, Agnes was cheered and greatly comforted by the pleasing reception she gave her ; while the young ladies in their turn (with the exception of the grave and reasonable Elizabeth, perhaps,) submitted rather impatiently to the lingering and sobbing embraces of their new aunt, as they had by no means gazed their fill on the lovely creature she brought with her.

Though there was certainly no reason in the world why the niece of Mrs. Barnaby should not be beautiful, both Mrs. Peters and her daughters gazed on her with something like astonishment. It seems as if it were strange that they had not heard before of what was so very much out of the common way ; and so great was the effect her appearance produced, and so engrossing the attention she drew, that Mrs. Barnaby passed almost uncriticised ; and when the ladies of the family met afterwards, a female committee in Mrs. Peters's dressing-room, and asked each other what they thought of their new relation, no one seemed prepared to say more of her than " Oh ! she has been handsome, certainly only she rouges, and is a great deal too tall But, did you ever see so beautiful, so elegant a creature as her niece ? " Such, with a few variations, according to the temper of the speaker, was the judgment of all.

Before this judgment was passed upon the new arrivals in the dressing-room, the aunt and niece had also undergone the scrutiny of both father and son, who had joined them at the tea-table.

They, too, had held their secret committee, and freely enough exchanged opinions on the subject.

" Upon my word, James, she is an extremely fine woman ; and I really never saw any person conduct herself better upon such an occasion. All strangers, you know ; and she, poor

soul! . . . with her heart breaking to think what she has lost! . . . I really cannot but admire her, and I flatter myself we shall all find means to make her like us too. I hope you agree with me, James, in my notions about her!"

"Oh, dear! yes. . . I am sure I do . . . a very excellent person, indeed, I have no doubt of it. . . But did you ever, sir, see such a creature as her niece? She seemed to me something more like a vision — an emanation — than a reality."

"A what, James?"

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir, but I believe I have lost my senses already. Don't you think, father, I had better set off for Oxford to-morrow morning?"

"Good gracious! no, James. . . Why should you go away just as your aunt Barnaby is come, and she having such kind intentions towards you all?"

"Very well, sir," replied the gay-hearted youth; "if such be your pleasure, I will brave the danger, and trust to Providence. . . But, good night, father! . . . I must say one word to my sisters before they go to bed" . . . And the privileged intruder entered his mother's dressing-room while the party were still discussing the merits of the new comers.

"Oh! here comes James," exclaimed Lucy, making room for him on the sofa where she was seated. "That's delightful! Come, mamma, sit down again . . . let us hear what this accomplished squire of dames says of her. . . Do you think, now, James, that Kattie M'Gee is the prettiest girl you ever saw?"

"Prettiest? — why, yes, prettiest, as contra-distinguished from most beautiful, — perhaps I do," replied the young man, with an *ex-cathedrà* sort of air; . . . "but if you mean to ask who I think the very loveliest creation ever permitted to consecrate the earth by setting her heaven-born feet upon it, I reply, Miss Agnes Willoughby!"

"Bravo! . . . That will do," replied Lucy. "I thought how it would fare with the pair Scottish lassie the moment I beheld this new divinity."

"Poor James! I am really sorry for you this time," said his mother, "for I cannot give you much hope of a cure from the process that has hitherto proved so successful. . . . I see no chance whatever of a 'fairer she' coming to cauterise, by

a new flame, the wound inflicted by this marvellous Miss Willoughby."

"They jest at scars who never felt a wound!" exclaimed the young man fervently "Mary! Elizabeth! have you none of you a feeling of pity for me? Oh! how I envy you all! for you can gaze and bask in safety in the beams of this glorious brightness, while I, as my mother says, am doomed to be scorched incurably!"

"If you have any discretion, James, you will run away," said his eldest sister "Her generous aunt, you know, has declared that she shall never have any of uncle Barnaby's money; and if you stay, you may depend upon it that, while you are making love to the niece I shall be winning the heart of the aunt, and contrive by my amiable cajoleries to get your share and my own too of all she so nobly means to bestow upon us."

"Nonsense, Mary! Don't believe her, James!" cried the worthy matter-of-fact Elizabeth. "If you are really in love with her already, I think it would be a very good scheme indeed for you to marry her, because then Mrs. Barnaby could be doing her duty to you both at once."

"Very true, Elizabeth," said the mother: "but you none of you recollect that while you have been regaling yourselves with the charms of the young lady, I have been worn to a thread by listening to the noble sentiments of the old old? mercy on me! the *elder* one. Pray, offer to set off with them, James, in quest of lodgings as soon as breakfast is over to-morrow, for I foresee that I cannot stand it long. . . . And now go away all of you, for I am tired to death. Good night! Good night!"

And now let us see the impression made on the aunt and niece by their reception, for, though separate rooms were prepared for them, Mrs. Barnaby did not permit the weary Agnes to enjoy the supreme luxury of this solitary apartment till she had indulged herself with a little gossip.

Mrs. Peters had herself shown Mrs. Barnaby to her room, at the door of which she was preparing to utter a final good night, but was not permitted to escape without another sisterly embrace, and being held by the hand for some minutes, while *the widow said, —*

"You know not how soothing it is to my feelings dearest

Margaret! . . . you must allow me to call you Margaret . . . you know not how soothing, how delightful it is to my feelings, to lay my head and poor aching heart to rest under the roof of my dear Barnaby's sister! . . . Alas! none but those who have suffered as I have done can fully understand this. . . . And yet I so much wish you to understand me, dearest sister! . . . I so long to have my heart appreciated by you! . . . Step in for one moment, will you?" . . . And the request was seconded by a gentle pulling, which sufficed to bring the imprisoned Mrs. Peters safely within the door. . . . "I cannot part with you till I have explained a movement . . . a rush of sentiment, I may call it,—that has come upon me since I entered this dear dwelling. The time is come, is fully come, you know, when fashion dictates the laying aside this garb of woe; and as my excellent mother brought me up in all things respectfully to follow the usages of society, I have been struggling to do so in the present instance . . . and have actually already furnished myself with a needful change of apparel . . . never yet, however, dearest Margaret!"—and here she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes,—"never yet have I had the courage to wear it. But, thank Heaven! I now feel strengthened, and when we meet to-morrow you shall see the influence the sight of you and your dear family has had upon me. And now, good night, my sister! . . . I will detain you no longer . . . but do explain to your charming family, dear Margaret! how this sudden change in my appearance has been wrought . . . Good night! . . . But where is Agnes? . . . Poor love! she will not sleep, even in your elegant mansion, till she has received my parting kiss. She perfectly dotes upon me! . . . Will you have the kindness to let her be sent to me?"

* * * * *

In the happiest state of spirits from the conscious skill with which she had managed this instantaneous change of garments . . . delighted with the unexpected elegance of the house, and all within it . . . with her reception, . . . and, above all else, with the recollection of the able manner in which she had propitiated the favour of these important relatives by her letter, the widow rang the bell for her Jerningham, and anxiously awaited her arrival and that of her niece, that she might indulge a little in the happy, boastful vein that swelled her bosom.

"Well, my dear," she broke out, the instant Agnes entered, "I hope you like my brother and sister, and my nieces and my nephew. . . . Upon my word, Agnes, you are the luckiest girl in the world! What a family for you to be introduced to, on a footing of the greatest intimacy too, and that on your very first introduction into life! They must be exceedingly wealthy . . . there can be no doubt of it. I suppose you have seen a great many servants, Jerningham?"

"Oh my!—sure enough, ma'am! . . . There's the footman, and the boy, and the coachman."

"A coachman!" interrupted Mrs. Barnaby; "they keep a carriage, then? . . . I really had no idea of it. My dear Barnaby never told me that . . . I wonder at it! . . . And well, Jerningham, how many maids are there?"

"Oh lor! ma'am, I hardly can tell, for I was tooked to sit in one room, and there was one, and may be two maids, as bided in another; that was the kitchen, I *sem*, ma'am, and every thing was so elegant, ma'am."

"I dare say it was, Jerningham, . . . and you must be very careful to keep up your own consequence, and mine too, in such a house as this. You understand me, Jerningham: I have already, you remember, given you some hints. . . . You have not forgotten, I hope?"

"No, that I haven't, ma'am," replied the girl; "and . . . I mean to tell 'em . . ." but looking at Agnes, she stopped short, as it seemed, because she was there.

"Very well . . . that's quite right, . . . and I'll give you these gloves of mine. Mend them neatly to-morrow morning, and never be seen to go out without gloves, Jerningham. . . . And now unpack my night-bag, . . . and you had better just open my trunk too. Remember to learn the hour of breakfast, and come to me exactly an hour and a half before. I shall put on my black satin to-morrow, and my lavender trimmings. . . . You know where to find them all, don't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Very well, forget nothing, and I will give you that cap with the lilac bows that I dirtied-out at Exeter. . . . Mercy on me, Agnes, how you are yawning!"

"*I am very tired, aunt, and I will wish you good night now, if you please.*"

“What! . . . without one word of all you have seen? Well, you are a stupid girl, Agnes, and that’s the fact. . . . You find nothing, I suppose, to like or admire in my sister’s house, or in those delightful, fashionable-looking young people?”

“Yes, indeed I do, aunt, . . . only I think I am too sleepy to do justice to them. They are very agreeable, and I like them very much indeed.”

“I am glad to hear it, child, . . . and I hope you will do your best to make yourself agreeable to them in return. If you were not such a baby, that young man would make a capital match for you, I dare say. But we must not think about that, I suppose. . . . And, now you may go; . . . but stay one minute. Observe, Agnes, I have explained to my sister all my feelings about my mourning, and you must take care to let the young people understand that you keep on with crape and bombasin some time longer, because you like it best. . . . And, by the by, I may as well tell you at once, my dear, that as you look so particularly well in deep mourning, and are so fond of wearing it, you had better not think of a change for some time to come. I am sorry to tell you, my dear, that I find every thing as I come up the country a vast deal indeed dearer than I expected, and therefore it will be absolutely necessary to save every penny I can. Now the fact is, that my mourning has been taken so much care of, and altogether so little worn, that the best gown is very nearly as good as new, and the worst has still a deal of wear left in it. So, I think the best thing we can do, Agnes, is to have both of them made up to fit you, that is, when your own are quite worn out; . . . and my bonnets, too, if I can teach Jerningham to wash the crape nicely in a little small beer, they will come out looking quite like new, . . . and they are so becoming to you! . . . and in this way, you see, my dear, a great many pounds may be saved.”

“Thank you, aunt,” meekly replied Agnes.

“Well, there’s a good girl, go to bed now, and be sure to make the young ladies understand that you go on with crape and bombasin because you like it.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. PETERS BECOMES UNEASY, BUT CONTRIVES TO ATTAIN HER OBJECT. — A PLEASANT WALK DISCOVERED TO BE A GOOD MEANS OF MAKING A PARTY OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACQUAINTED WITH EACH OTHER. — MRS. PETERS SHOWS MUCH PROMPTITUDE AND EXPERIENCE IN TAKING LODGINGS. — SHE ALSO DISCOVERS THE BEST MODE OF LIONISING A LADY WHO IS TOO BEAUTIFUL. — ANOTHER COUNTRY WALK IMPROVES THE INTIMACY BETWEEN THE YOUNG LADIES.

THE impressions mutually received over-night were not greatly changed when the parties met again on the following morning, excepting, indeed, that Mr. Peters was rather surprised at seeing the widow looking so very smart, and so very much handsomer.

The young people could hardly admire Agnes more than they had done before, though they confessed that they were not fully aware of the particular beauty of her hair, or of the perfect symmetry of her person, till they had seen her by daylight; but Mrs. Peters pleaded guilty to disliking her affectionate sister quite as much on Tuesday morning as she had done on Monday night; and as the sun shone brightly she took advantage of this to introduce the subject that was decidedly next her heart.

"You must take care to put this beautiful day to profit, Mrs. Barnaby," said she. "Of course you have heard of our rocks and our downs, Miss Willoughby? and you could not look at them through a more favourable atmosphere. . . . We shall have time to take you to our famous windmill, and to show you some lodgings too, Mrs. Barnaby, for we Bristol people never sacrifice business to pleasure. I thought of you yesterday morning when I saw a bill up at Sion Row . . . some of the prettiest lodgings in Clifton, and it will be dangerous to put off looking at them, they are so very likely to be taken."

The good-natured Mr. Peters felt a great inclination to say that there could be no need of hurry in looking out for lodgings, as he should be so very glad to keep the ladies where *they were*; but, though the most perfect harmony (real harmony) and good feeling existed between Mr. Peters and his

wife, a very salutary understanding also existed, that whenever she said any thing that he did not quite comprehend, which not unfrequently happened, he was neither to contradict nor observe upon it till the matter had been inquired into between them when they were *tête-à-tête*, upon which occasions he always found her as ready to hear as to render reasons, and it was rare indeed that the conference broke up without their being of the same mind.

In conformity to this excellent rule, the good man suffered this lodging-hunting expedition to be arranged without offering any objection, and set off on his daily walk to the Bristol exchange, with no other observation than that he should leave James to escort them, as he did not think he should find him a very gay companion if he took him away.

The ladies then immediately dispersed to bonnet and cloak themselves, and in a few minutes the whole party, amounting to seven, all turned out upon the broad flagstones of Rodney Place, and dividing into three couples, with James hanging on upon that of which Agnes was one, proceeded, headed by Mrs. Barnaby and Mrs. Peters, towards Sion Row.

Before they reached it, however, James called a council with his eldest sister and Miss Willoughby, upon the necessity of so very large a party all going to look for lodgings.

"Would it not be better, Mary," said the young man, "for us to take Miss Willoughby to the down? The others can follow if they like it, you know, and we shall be sure to meet them coming back."

"Very well, then, tell mamma so, will you?" replied the young lady, turning off in the direction indicated.

The message caused the elder ladies to stop; Mrs. Peters looked very much as if she did not like her share in the division, but, after a moment's hesitation, she good-humouredly nodded assent, and walked on, Elizabeth (who in her heart believed Mrs. Barnaby was the kindest person in the world, because she said so,) joining the elder ladies, and the four others striking off towards the beautiful rising ground on the right.

There is a sort of free-masonry among young people which is never brought into action till the elders are out of the way, and it was probably for this reason that Agnes felt better acquainted with her companions, before they had pursued

their walk for half an hour, than all the talk of the preceding evening, or that of the breakfast-table, had enabled her to become. Something, too, might have been effected in the way of familiarity by an accident arising from the nature of the scenery upon which they paused to gaze. On reaching the windmill, and looking down upon the course of the Avon, winding its snake-like path at their feet, with the woods of Leigh, rich in their midsummer foliage, feathering down on one side, and rocks of limestone, bright in their veins of red and grey, freshly opened by the quarrying, rising beautifully bold on the other, Agnes stood wrapt in ecstasy. All she had yet seen of nature had been the flowery meads and blooming apple orchards of the least romantic part of Devonshire; and though there was beauty enough in this to awaken that love of landscape which is always one of the strongest feelings in a finely-organised mind, she was quite unprepared for the sort of emotion the scene she now beheld occasioned her. She pressed forward before her companions, and, utterly unmindful of danger, leaned over the verge of the giddy precipice till young Peters, really alarmed, seized her by the arm and drew her back again. Tears were in her eyes, and her face was as pale as marble.

"My dear Miss Willoughby!" said Mary, kindly, "the precipice has made you giddy, . . . I do believe, if James had not seized you, that you would have fallen!"

"Oh! no, no," replied Agnes, shaking her head, while a bright flush instantly chased the paleness, "I do assure you I was not in any danger at all . . . only I never saw any thing so beautiful before."

"Let us sit down," said Lucy. "There is no dampness whatever. It is almost the first day of real summer, and the air is delicious. Is it not beautiful here, Agnes?"

A look of gratitude, and almost of affection, was the answer; and as the little party sat together, inhaling that most delicious of essences which the sun draws forth when herbs and flowers are what he shines upon, with a lovely landscape around, and each other's fair young faces and blithe voices beside them, was it wonderful that the recent date of their acquaintance should be forgotten, or that they laughed, and chatted, and looked about, and enjoyed themselves, with as much gaiety and as little restraint as if they had known each other for years?

They were all very happy, and a full hour passed unheeded as they amused themselves sometimes with idle talk, sometimes with listening to the reverberating thunder that arose from the blasting of the rocks below them, and sometimes by sitting silent for a whole minute together, pulling up handfuls of the fragrant thyme with which their couch was strewed. They were all very happy, but none of the party had any notion of the happiness of Agnes. It was the first moment of real positive enjoyment she had tasted since she left Empton, and a feeling like renewed life seemed to seize upon her senses. Without reasoning about it, she had felt, during the last few months, as if it were her fate to be unhappy, and that all she had to do was to submit; but, to her equal delight and astonishment, she now found that nobody ever was so much mistaken, for that she was one of the most particularly happy people in the world, wanting nothing but sun, sweet air, and a lovely landscape, to make her forget that such a thing as sorrow existed; and the only thought that threw a shadow upon the brightness of her spirit, was that which suggested that she must have been very wicked to have doubted for a moment the goodness of God, who had formed this beautiful world on purpose to make people happy.

But though every moment of such an hour as this seems to leave its own sweet and lasting impression on the memory the whole is soon gone; and when Mary, with the wisdom called for by being the eldest of the party, jumped up, exclaiming that they had quite forgotten their appointment to meet her mother on the down, Agnes roused herself with a sigh, as if she had passed through a momentary trance.

They met the rest of their party, however, though the order of the meeting was changed, for it was our young set who encountered the others on their return, after a ramble of half a mile or so towards the turnpike, which it is probable had not been enlivened by any such raptures as those felt by Agnes.

The two parties now joined, and the conversation was general, not very lively perhaps, but by no means devoid of interest to Agnes, who had fallen so heartily in love with St. Vincent's rocks, as to make her hear of being fixed for some time in their neighbourhood with the greatest delight.

"Well, ma'am, have you seen any lodgings that you liked?" said the eldest Miss Peters to Mrs. Barnaby.

"Yes, my dear Mary, I have, indeed," replied the widow; "thanks to your dear kind mamma, who has really been *indefatigable*. Clifton seems exceedingly full, I think, and I am not sorry for it, for my poor dear Agnes really wants a little change to rouse her spirits. . . . That mourning habit that she so delights in is, I am sorry to say, but too just a type of her disposition."

The brother and sisters, who had so lately shared in the gay hilarity of Agnes's laughter, exchanged glances, but said nothing, while she herself blushing, and half laughing again at the same recollection, changed the subject by saying, —

"And have you taken lodgings, aunt?"

"Yes, my dear, I have . . . small but very delightful lodgings in Sion Row . . . the very Row, Agnes, that you heard my dear sister mention this morning as so desirable! . . . and which we quite despaired of getting at first, for there appeared to be all sorts of difficulties. But," turning to Mrs. Peters, "you seem to understand all these things, Margaret, so admirably well! You made the good woman do exactly what you pleased. . . . So clever, . . . and so like your poor dear brother! . . ."

"My poor dear brother must have been wonderfully changed if he ever showed himself half so self-willed!" thought the conscious Mrs. Peters, who had certainly used something like bribery and corruption to remove all difficulties in procuring for her sister-in-law apartments, which must by agreement be entered upon the following day.

"But you have got them, aunt, at last? . . . I am so glad of it! . . . for I think Clifton the most beautiful place I ever saw in my life."

"Falling in love with the young man, that is quite clear," thought the active-minded widow.

A fresh return of happiness awaited Agnes on re-entering the house. Lucy threw her wraps aside and sat down to the piano-forte: she played prettily, and sang, too, well enough to delight the thirsty ears of Agnes, who had never heard a note, excepting at the cathedral at Exeter, since she had left her school. The evident pleasure which her performance gave to her young auditor encouraged the good-natured Lucy to proceed, and, excepting during an interval occupied by eating sandwiches for luncheon, she continued to play and sing till three o'clock.

Though by no means one of those performers who like to keep the instrument wholly to themselves, it never occurred to her to ask Agnes to play. There was something so childishly eager in the delight with which she listened, that Lucy fancied it was the novelty of the thing that so captivated her attention; and with something of that feeling, perhaps, against which her father had warned them all, and which leads young ladies at Clifton to fancy that young ladies in Devonshire must be greatly behind-hand in all things, she somehow or other took it for granted that it was very unlikely Agnes Willoughby should have learned to play or sing.

When the time-piece on the chimney struck three, there seemed to be a general movement among the Peters family, indicative of another *sortie*.

"I suppose you walk again, mother?" said the young man.

"I suppose so, James. I dare say Mrs. Barnaby will like to go to the library and put her name down at the rooms."

"Oh yes! . . . I shall, indeed, . . . for poor Agnes's sake! . . ."

"Very well; that is all quite right. . . . You and I are smart enough, Mrs. Barnaby, but I suppose the girls will choose to change their walking bonnets for bonnets for the walk, and we must wait for them. Here are all the annuals, I believe, . . . and I am deep in this review."

So saying, Mrs. Peters threw aside her shawl, seated herself in a low bee-hive that just fitted her little person, and "happified" herself with a biting article in the Quarterly.

Mrs. Barnaby smilingly turned to the piles of pretty books that decorated the loo-table; but hardly had the young ladies disappeared, and Mrs. Peters occupied herself, than she rose, and silently glided out of the room.

Agnes had no better bonnet to put on than the one she had already displayed, but she ran up stairs with the other girls, because one of them had put out a hand inviting her to do so, and it was therefore to one of their rooms she went, instead of her own: another step this, and a very considerable one too, towards intimacy between young ladies; for few things produce a more genial flow of talk than the being surrounded by a variety of objects in which all parties take a common interest.

Had Mrs. Barnaby been upon this occasion a little less humble-minded in her estimate of her own charms, it would have been better for her; but, unfortunately, a restless spirit within whispered to her that she was not quite beautiful enough for the "walk," and the "library," and the "rooms," and it was to refresh her rouge a little, that she followed the young ladies up stairs.

Now her rouge had been decidedly sufficient before, and, moreover, after she had touched up her bloom to the point she deemed to be the most advantageous, it struck her that her lavender and black bonnet and plumes looked sombre, and would be rendered infinitely more becoming by introducing among the blonde beneath a few bright blossoms of various colours; so that, when she re-entered the drawing-room, she looked precisely like a clever caricature of what she had been when she left it,— the likeness not lost, but all that touched upon the ridiculous or *outré* brought out and exaggerated.

Mrs. Peters looked up as she entered, and gave her one steady glance, then rose from her chair and rang the bell.

The young people were all seated in array, waiting for the widow's re-appearance as a signal to depart, and all rose together as she entered; but they had yet longer to wait, for Mrs. Peters, after ringing the bell, quietly re-seated herself, and prepared to resume her book, saying,—

"Upon second thoughts, dear friends, I think we shall do better if we order the carriage, and take Mrs. Barnaby and Miss Willoughby to Bristol. The library and all that will be within five minutes' walk of their lodgings, and as they leave us to-morrow, it will be making better use of our time to go to Bristol to-day." At this moment a servant entered and the determined little lady, without waiting to hear any opinions on her proposal, desired to know if the coachman was in the house.

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply.

"Then tell him to bring the carriage round as quickly as he can. . . . You may give Miss Willoughby another song, Lucy, in the interval. I want you, Mary, in my room for a moment." . . . And Mrs. Peters left the room followed by her eldest daughter.

"*Have I puzzled you, Mary?*" said she, laughing, and closing the door of the dressing-room as soon as they had

entered it. . . . "Don't think me whimsical, child, but upon my word I cannot undertake to parade that painted and plumaged giantess through Clifton. I will sacrifice myself for a two hours' purgatory, and listen with the patience of a martyr to the record of her graces, her virtues, and her dignity, but it must be in the close carriage. I always prefer performing my penances in private. Elizabeth evidently believes in her, and I really think admires her beauty into the bargain; so she had better go with us, for I presume, Mary, you have no wish to be of the party?"

"Oh yes, I will certainly go, if Agnes does. . . . But, mamma, I hope you wo'n't take a fancy against our being a great deal with Miss Willoughby. I will agree in all you may choose to say against this overwhelming aunt Barnaby, but it would grieve me to be rude to her charming niece. She is, I do assure you, the very sweetest creature I ever made acquaintance with."

"It is evident that you have taken a great fancy for her, . . . and, upon the whole, it is a fancy that does you honour, for it clearly proves you to be exempt from the littleness of fearing a rival. . . . There is not a single girl in the neighbourhood that can be compared to her in beauty—I am quite ready to acknowledge that; . . . but you must excuse me, Mary, if I doubt the possibility of my sympathising with you in your general and unqualified admiration of a young lady brought up by my portentous sister Barnaby."

"But Agnes Willoughby was not brought up by her, mamma . . . quite the contrary. . . . You laugh, mamma, but I do assure you . . ."

"I laugh at your '*quite the contrary*,' which means, I suppose, that she has been brought down by her; and you will be brought down too, my dear, if you suffer yourself to be identified with her and her rouge in public."

"Identified with Mrs. Barnaby? . . . I am quite sure that I do not like her at all better than you do; and I will make myself into a porcupine, and set up my quills at her whenever she comes near me, if you wish it; but then, on your side, you must promise" . . . and the young lady took her mother's hand very coaxingly . . . "you must promise to take the trouble of talking a little to Agnes . . . will you?"

"Yes, I will, if I have an opportunity; . . . and I am

sure, if she is good for any thing, I pity her. . . . Now, then, let us go down again, and you shall see how well I will behave."

Before they reached the drawing-room, however, Mary Peters had conceived a project of her own. She knew what sort of a drive it would be when her mother was "behaving well" to a person she disliked, and she instantly addressed a whispered request to Agnes that she would stay at home, and chat, instead of going to Bristol.

"If I may!" . . . replied Agnes, colouring with pleasure at the proposal; but the yoke upon her young neck was far from being as easy a one as that by which Mrs. Peters guided her daughters, and she felt so much doubt of obtaining permission if she asked it herself, that she added, "Will you ask for me?"

Mrs. Barnaby," said her courageous friend, "you must do without your niece during your drive, if you please, for she is going to look over my portfolios."

"You are excessively kind, my dear Mary!" replied the benign Mrs. Barnaby, too well satisfied at displaying herself in her beloved sister's carriage to care three straws what became of her niece the while. "I am sure Agnes can never be sufficiently grateful for all your kindness."

The delighted Agnes instantly disembarrassed herself of all out-of-door appurtenances, and Lucy, without saying a word about it, quietly did the same. The carriage was announced, the radiant widow stalked forth, Mrs. Peters took Elizabeth by the arm, and followed her, shaking her head reproachfully at Lucy as she passed her, and the young man escorted them down stairs; but having placed them in the carriage, he declined following them, saying, —

"I dare say my father will be glad of the drive home, for it is quite hot to-day. — You will be sure to find him at the Exchange Coffee-house if you get there by half-past four. . . . A pleasant ride! . . . Good morning!" and the next moment he joined the happy trio in the drawing-room.

"And what shall we do with ourselves?" said he. "Would Miss Willoughby like to promenade among the beaux and belles? Or will she let us keep her all to ourselves, and take another delightful country walk with us? Which do you vote for, Miss Willoughby?"

“For the country walk, decidedly,” she replied.

“Then let us go down by the zig-zag, and walk under the rocks,” said Lucy; and in another minute they were *en route* for that singular and (despite the vile colour of the water) most beautiful river-path.

The enjoyment of this second ramble was not less to Agnes than that of the first; for, if the newness of the scenery was past, the newness of her companions was past too; and she suffered herself to talk, with all the open freedom of youth and innocence, of her past life, upon which Mary, with very friendly skill, contrived to question her; for she was greatly bent upon discovering the source and cause of the widely different tone of mind which her acuteness had discovered between Mrs. Barnaby and her *protégée*. This walk fully sufficed to explain it; for though Agnes would have shrunk into impenetrable reserve had she been questioned about her aunt Barnaby, she opened her heart joyfully to all inquiries respecting Empton, and the beloved Wilmots; nor was she averse, when asked if Mrs. Barnaby had placed her with these very delightful people, to expatiate upon the eccentric character of her half-known aunt Betsy. On the contrary, this was a subject upon which she loved to dwell, because it puzzled her. The one single visit she had made to Miss Compton in her bower, with the simple but delicious repast which followed it the old lady's marked kindness to herself, her mysteriously rude manner to her aunt Martha, . . . the beauty of her bower, the prettiness of her little parlour, had all left a sort of vague and romantic impression upon her mind, which no subsequent interviews had seemed to render more intelligible. And all this she told, and was at the fact that it was this same dear, strange, variable aunt Compton, who had placed her in the care of Mrs. Wilmet.

“Miss Compton of Compton Bassett,” repeated Mary; “that is a mighty pretty aristocratic designation. Your aunt Betsy is an old spinster of large fortune, I presume?”

“Why no, I don't believe she is; indeed, my aunt Barnaby says she is very poor, but that she might have been a great deal richer had she not given so much of her property to the poor; . . . but I wish I knew something more of her. . . . I cannot help thinking that, with all her oddities, I should like her very much. There is one thing very strange about

her," she added musingly, "she is quite deformed, quite crooked, and yet I think she is one of the most agreeable-looking persons I ever saw in my life."

"She has a handsome face, perhaps?" said Lucy.

"No, I believe not. She is very pale, and her face is small, and there is nothing very particular in her features; but yet, somehow or other, I love dearly to look at her."

"The force of contrast, perhaps?" whispered James to his eldest sister.

"No doubt of it," she replied.

And thus they walked and talked, till it was quite time to turn back; and though their pace was somewhat accelerated, it was as much as they could do to get home in time to dress for their six o'clock dinner.

But the walk was not only agreeable, but profitable to Agnes, for at the end of it Miss Peters felt fully prepared to give a reason for her confidence relative to the cause of the dissimilarity between Mrs. Barnaby and her niece.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. BARNABY TAKES POSSESSION OF HER LODGINGS, AND SETS ABOUT MAKING HERSELF COMFORTABLE. — SHE OPENS HER PLANS A LITTLE TO AGNES, AND GIVES HER SOME EXCELLENT ADVICE. — THE COMFORT OF A MIDSUMMER FIRE. — THE APARTMENT OF AGNES SET IN ORDER. — A LECTURE ON USEFULNESS. — VIRTUOUS INDIGNATION.

THE following morning Mrs. Peters took care, without being particularly rude, that a movement of some activity "to speed the parting guest," should be perceptible in her household. Mr. Peters took a very kind leave of both ladies at breakfast, and expressed a very friendly wish of being useful to them as long as they should remain at Clifton; but his judicious lady, who generally knew, without any discourtesy, how to make him perceive that his first impressions were somewhat less acute than her own, had pointed out to him a few peculiarities in Mrs. Barnaby, which he certainly did not approve. The principal of these, perhaps, was that of her rouging *which for some time he steadfastly refused to believe, declaring that her complexion was the most beautiful he ever saw; but*

when, his examination being sharpened, he could withhold his belief no longer, he ingenuously confessed he did not like it, and allowed that, though he thought it would be great folly to lose the fine fortune she had promised them, on that account, he certainly thought he should feel more comfortable when the rouge pots were all gone into lodgings, because they were articles he did not wish to put in the way of his girls.

As soon as Mr. Peters had taken his leave, the footman was very audibly instructed to order a porter to come for Mrs. Barnaby's luggage; "And let it be before the hall dinner, Stephen, that William may be able to walk beside the things, and see that none of them are dropped by the way."

And then Mrs. Barnaby was very kindly asked if she would not like to send her maid to see that a fire was lighted in the drawing-room, and that any thing she wanted for dinner might be ordered in? And then the thoughtful Mrs. Peters proposed, after Betty Jacks had been gone about an hour, that James should go to the lodgings, and that they should not set off themselves till he came back and gave notice that every thing was ready and comfortable.

In short, Mrs. Barnaby, her niece, her maid, and all their travelling baggage, were safely deposited at No. 1. Sion Row, before the clock struck three.

The widow looked about her when she first got into her own drawing-room very much as if she did not know how she got there. She was puzzled and mystified by the tactics of Mrs. Peters. Delighted beyond all bounds of moderation in finding the family so infinitely higher in station than she had anticipated, her first idea, on perceiving what a land of milk and honey she had fallen into, was to exert all her fascinating talents to enable her to stay there as long as possible. But the conviction that this scheme would not take, came upon her, she hardly knew how. She had not the slightest inclination to persuade herself that the "dear Margaret" was otherwise than civil to her, yet she felt as if she was to be kept in order, and neither go, nor stay, except as she might receive permission; but, finally, she contrived to heal the wound her vanity had thus received by believing that Mrs. Peters's high fashion, and superior knowledge of life, naturally rendered her manners unlike any she had hitherto been acquainted with, and consequently that she might occasionally mistake her meaning.

Upon the whole, however, she began her Clifton campaign in very good spirits. The Peterases must be extremely useful acquaintance, and might be safely boasted of any where as dear and near relations. This was very different from arriving, as she had done, at Exeter, without a chance of making a single acquaintance besides her dress-maker. Moreover, she had got through the difficulty of throwing off her weeds admirably; she had managed matters so that the dress of Agnes should be perfectly respectable, and yet cost her nothing for a twelvemonth; she had just received a quarter's income without any deduction, and, to crown all, "she never was in better looks in her life."

Short, then, was the interval of discomfot that kept her inactive on first entering her lodgings. "It was not quite such a drawing-room as that of Mrs. Peters, to be sure, but it was the most fashionable part of Clifton; and with her management, and admirable ways of contriving things, she should soon make it extremely *lady-like*."

"Well, now then we must set to work, Agnes," . . . she said, drawing off her gloves. "Come, Jerningham, you must not stand looking out of the window, child; there is an immense deal to do before we can be comfortable. And the first thing will be to get all the trunks up, those that came by the waggon, and those that came with us."

"Then I'm sure, ma'am," replied the waiting-maid, "I don't know where you'll find room to put 'em."

"They must all be brought in here, Jerningham, to begin; and when I have got all my own things unpacked, we must see how we shall be off about drawers, and closets, and pegs, and all that; and then the empty trunks and boxes must be carried into your garret, Jerningham, or into that little room inside mine, that I mean to give up to Agnes."

"To me, aunt? . . . How very kind!" exclaimed her niece, delighted beyond measure at the idea of some place, no matter what, where she might be alone.

"Yes, my dear. . . . You have not seen the rooms yet; come with me Agnes, while Jerningham goes down about the trunks, and I will show you our apartments."

"But what am I to do then, ma'am, about the trunks?" said Betty Jacks in a fit of despair; "I'm sure I can't carry 'em up any how."

"Then ask the people of the house to help you."

"Why, there's only the old lady and one maid, ma'am, and I'm sure they can't and they won't."

Mrs. Barnaby meditated for a moment, and then drew out her purse. "Here is sixpence, Jerningham: go to the next public-house, and hire a man to bring up my boxes. It is immensely expensive, Agnes, this moving about, and we really must be very careful! . . . Of course, my dear, you do not want any dinner after the Rodney Place luncheon? I took care to take a couple of glasses of wine on purpose; and you should remember, my dear, that I have every earthly thing to pay for you, and never neglect an opportunity of sparing me when you can. After we have done our unpacking we can dress, and go out to the pastry-cook's—there is hardly any thing I like better than cakes—and you can have a biscuit, you know, if you should want any thing before tea."

The majestic lady then led the way to their "apartments," which consisted of a small bed-room behind the drawing-room, and a very small closet, with a little camp-bed behind that.

"Here, my dear, is the room I intend for you. It is, I believe, generally used for a servant, but I have been at the expense of hiring a garret for Jerningham on purpose that you might have the comfort of this. In fact, that bed of mine is not larger than I like for myself, and the drawers, and all that, are not at all more than I shall want; so remember, if you please, not to let any single article of yours, great or small, be ever seen in my room: I shall be puzzled enough, I am sure, as it is, to find room for my own things. You have a great advantage over me, there, Agnes; . . . that fancy of yours for keeping yourself in deep mourning makes it so easy for you to find space enough for every thing."

"Oh yes!" replied Agnes joyfully, "every thing shall be put into the closet. What very pleasant lodgings these are, aunt . . . so much better than those at Exeter! It is such a nice closet this, and I am so much obliged to you for giving it up to me!"

"I shall be always ready to make sacrifices for you, Agnes, so long as you continue to behave well. Here come some of the boxes. . . . now then, you must kneel down and help to unpack them."

It was a long and a wearisome task that unpacking, and often did Agnes, as the sun shone in upon them while they performed it, think of her pleasant walks with her new friends, and long to breathe again the air that blew upon her as she stood on the top of St. Vincent's rocks.

Mrs. Barnaby, on the contrary, was wholly present to the work before her; and though she waxed weary and warm before it was completed, her spirits never flagged, but appeared to revive within her at every fresh deposit of finery that she came upon, and again and again did she call upon Agnes and Jerningham to admire the skill with which she had stowed them.

At length the work was done, and every disposable corner of her room filled; under the bed, over the bed, in the drawers, and upon the drawers, not an inch remained unoccupied by some of the widow's personalities.

It was by this time so late that the cake scheme was given up, and the drawing-room being restored to order, the two ladies sat down to tea. It was then that Mrs. Barnaby's genius displayed itself in sketching plans for the future: she had learned from Mrs. Peters and the simple-minded Elizabeth, during their drive to and from Bristol, all particulars respecting the Clifton balls, and, moreover, that the Peters family seldom failed to attend them.

"This will be quite enough to set us going respectably: people that come in their own carriage must have influence. I trust that those stupid humdrums, the Wilmots, gave you some dancing lessons, Agnes?"

"Yes, aunt."

"You are always so short in your answers, you never tell me any thing. Do you think you could get through a quadrille without blundering?"

"Yes, I hope so, aunt."

"Remember, if you can't, I shall be most dreadfully angry, for it would destroy all my plans entirely.—I mean, Agnes, that you shall dance as much as possible;—nothing extends one's acquaintance among young men so much. I am not quite sure myself about dancing. I don't think I shall do it here, on account of dear Margaret . . . perhaps she might think it too soon. I shall probably take to cards; that's not a bad way of making acquaintance either; but in all things remem-

ber that you play into my hands, and whenever you have a new partner, remember that you always say to him, 'You must give me leave to introduce you to my aunt' Do you hear me, Agnes?"

"Yes, aunt," replied the poor girl with an involuntary sigh.

"What a poor stupid creature you are, to be sure!" returned Mrs. Barnaby in a tone of much displeasure. "What in the world can you sigh for now, just at the very moment that I am talking to you of balls and dancing? I wish to Heaven you were a little more like what I was at your age, Agnes! Be so good as to tell me what you are sighing for?"

"I don't know, aunt; I believe I am tired."

"Tired? and of what, I should like to know? Come, come, let us have no fine lady airs, if you please; and don't look as if you were going to cry, whatever you do. There is nothing on earth I dislike so much as gloom. I am of a very cheerful, happy temper myself, and it's perfect misery to me to see any body look melancholy. . . . I declare, Agnes, I am as hungry as a hound! I don't like to ring for Jerningham again, she looked so horridly cross; and I wish, my dear, you would just toast this round of bread for me. Mrs. Peters was quite right about the fire it is such a comfort! and coals are so cheap here. . . . Let me stir it up a little there, now it's as bright as a furnace; you can just kneel down in the middle here upon the rug."

Agnes obeyed, and after some minutes' assiduous application to the labour imposed, she presented the toasted bread, her own fair face scarcely less changed in tint by the operation.

"Gracious me, child! what a fright you have made of yourself! you should have held the other hand up before your face. You are but a clumsy person, I am afraid, at most things, as well as at satin-stitch. Will you have some more tea, my dear?" draining, as was her habit, the last drop into her own cup before she asked the question, and then extending her hand to that genial source of hospitality, the tepid urn.

"No more, thank you, aunt. . . . I will go now, if you please, and take all my things out of your way and I shall make my closet so comfortable!"

"I dare say you will. But stay a moment, Agnes: if you find you have more room than you want, do put my two best

bonnet-boxes somewhere or other among your things, so that I can get at them . . . so that Jerningham can get at them, I mean, easily."

"I will, if I can, aunt, but I am afraid there will hardly be room for my chair. However, you shall come and see, if you please, yourself, and then you will be the best judge; but I will go first, and get every thing in order."

"Very well, then, Agnes, you may tell Jerningham to separate every thing like mourning from my things, and give it all to you. And you must contrive, my dear, to cut and make up every thing to fit yourself, for I really can be at no expense about it. It is perfectly incredible how money goes in this part of the country, so different from our dear Silverton! . . . However, I will not grumble about it, for I consider it quite my duty to bring you out into the world, and I knew well enough before I set out that it could not be done for nothing. But it is a sort of self-devotion I shall never complain of, if you do but turn out well."

Agnes was standing while this affectionate speech was spoken, and having quietly waited for its conclusion, again uttered her gentle "thank you, aunt," and retired to arrange the longed-for paradise of her little closet.

Darkness overtook her before she had fully completed her task; but, perhaps, she wilfully lingered over it, for it kept her alone, and permitted her bright and innocent spirit to indulge itself by recalling all the delight she had felt in looking down upon the bold and beautiful scenery of the Avon, and she blessed Heaven for the fund of happiness she was now conscious existed within her, since the power of looking out upon nature seemed sufficient to produce a joy great enough to make her forget aunt Barnaby, and every thing else that gave her pain. A part, too, of her hours of light, was spent in opening more than one of her dear little volumes to seek for some remembered description of scenery which she thought would be more intelligible to her now than heretofore; and as Spenser happened to fall into her hands, it was no great wonder if his flowery meads and forests drear tempted her onwards till she almost lost herself among them.

At length, however, she had done all that she thought she could do towards giving a closet the appearance of a room; and having stowed her tiny looking-glass out of the way, and

placed pens, ink, and a book or two, on the rickety little table in its stead, she looked round in the dusky twilight with infinite satisfaction, and thought, that were she quite sure of taking a long country-walk about three times a week with the *Reveries*, she should be very, very happy, let every thing else go on as it might.

Having come to this satisfactory conclusion (for a walk three times a week was an indulgence she might reasonably hope for), she cast one fond look round upon her dark but dear solitude, and then went to rejoin her aunt in the drawing-room, and announce its state of perfection to her. She found her seated at the open window.

"What have you been about, Agnes, all this time?" she said. "It is lucky that my cheerful, happy temper, does not make solitude as dreadful to me as it is to most people; or I should be badly off, living with you. You are but a stupid, moping sort of a body, my dear, I must say, or you would have guessed that there was more to see at the front of the house than at the back of it. I declare I never saw such a delightful window as this in my life. You would never believe what a mall there has been here from the moment I took my place till just now, that it's got almost dark; . . . and even now, Agnes, if you will come here," . . . she added in a whisper, . . . "but don't speak . . . you may see one couple left, and lovers they are, I'll be bound for them . . . Here, stand here by me."

"No, thank you, aunt," said Agnes, retreating; "I don't want to see them, and I think it is more comfortable by the fire."

"You don't choose to spoil sport, I suppose; . . . but don't be such a fool, and pretend to be wiser than your betters. Come here, I say; you shall take one peep, I am determined."

And as this determination was enforced by a tolerably strong pull, Agnes yielded, and found herself, greatly against her inclination, standing at the open window, with her head obligingly thrust out of it by her resolute aunt.

The lamps were by this time lighted, and at that moment a remarkably tall, gentleman-like looking personage passed beneath one that stood almost immediately below the window, receiving its full glare upon his features. Beside him was a lady; and a young one, alight, tall, and elegant-looking, who

more than leaned upon his arm, for her head almost reclined upon his shoulder; and, as they passed, Agnes saw his hand raised to her face, and he seemed to be playing with her ringlets.

Agnes forcibly withdrew her head, while Mrs. Barnaby threw herself half out of the window for a minute, then drew back, laughing heartily, and shut down the sash.

"That's capital!" . . . she cried; "they fancied themselves so very snug. But wasn't he a fine figure of a man, Agnes? I never saw a finer fellow in my life. He's taller than Tate by half a head, I am sure. But you're right about the fire too, for the wind comes over that down uncommonly cold. I shall go to work for an hour, and then have a little bread and cheese and a pint of beer."

Mrs. Barnaby suited the action to the word, and unlocked her work-box, in which she found ready to her hand good store of work prepared for her beloved needle.

"Now, only see, Agnes, what a thing it would have been for you, if you had learned to work satin-stitch!" she said. "Here am I, happy and amused, and before I go to bed I dare say I shall have done a good inch of this beautiful collar. . . . And only look at yourself! What earthly use are you of to any body? . . . I wonder you are not ashamed to sit idle in that way, while you see me hard at work."

"May I get a book, aunt?"

"Books, books, books! . . . If there is one thing more completely full of idleness than another, it is reading, — just spelling along one line after another . . . And what comes of it? Now, here's a leaf done already, and wait a minute and you'll see a whole bunch of grapes done in spotting. There is some sense in that: but poring over a lot of rubbishy words is an absolute sin, for it is wasting the time that Heaven gives us, and doing no good to our fellow-creatures."

"And the grapes!" thought Agnes, but she said nothing.

"Why don't you answer when I speak to you, child? . . . Did that stupid Mrs. Wilmot never tell you to speak when you were spoken to? . . . What a different creature you would have been if I had had the placing you, instead of that crooked, frumpish old maid! . . . But I am sadly afraid it is too late now to hope that you will ever be good for much."

"I should be very glad to try to make myself competent

for the situation of a governess, aunt, as you once mentioned to me," replied Agnes.

"Oh! by the by, I want to speak to you about that. You are not to say one word on that subject here, remember, nor indeed any where, till at such time as I shall give you leave. It will be cruelly hard for me to have the monstrous expense of maintaining you, exactly as if you were my own child, and not have the credit of it. And, besides, I don't feel quite sure that I shall send you out as a governess . . . it must depend upon circumstances. Perhaps I shall get you married, and that might suit me just as well. All you have to do is to keep yourself always ready to go out at a minute's warning, if I say the word; but you need mention it to nobody, and particularly not to my relations here."

"Very well, aunt . . . I will say nothing about it. But in order to be ready when you say the word, I think I ought to study a good deal, and I am willing to do it if you will give me leave."

"How you do plague me, child, about your learning! Push the candles this way, can't you, and snuff them, when you see me straining my poor eyes with this fine work . . . And do you know, miss, I think it's very likely those books you are so mighty fond of are nothing in the world but trumpery story-books, for I don't believe you'd hanker after them so, if they were really in the teaching line. For, after all, Agnes, if I must speak the truth, I don't believe you ever did pay attention to any single thing that could be really useful in the way of governessing. Now, music, for instance, nobody ever heard you say a word about that; and you ought to sing too, if you wer'n't more stupid than any thing ever was, for both your father and mother sang like angels."

"I can sing a little, aunt," said Agnes.

"There, now, . . . isn't it as plain as possible that you take no pleasure in it? . . . though every body said your poor dear mother could have made her fortune by singing. But you care for nothing but books, books, books! . . . and what profit, I should like to know, will ever come of that?"

"But I do care very much indeed for music, aunt," said Agnes eagerly, "only I did not talk about it, because I thought it might not be convenient for you to have an instrument for me. But I believe I could learn to get my bread by music, if I had a piano-forte to study with."

"Grant me patience! And you really want me to go and get you a piano-forte, which is just the most expensive thing in the world? And that, after I had so kindly opened my heart to you about my fears of not having money enough! I do think that passes any thing I ever heard in my life!"

"Indeed, aunt, I never would have said a word about it if. . . ."

"If? if what, I should like to know? Heaven knows it is seldom I lose my temper about any thing, but it is almost too much to hear you ask me to my face to ruin myself in that way, and you without a chance of ever having a penny to repay me!"

"Pray forget it, aunt! Indeed I do not wish to bear expense to you, and will very gladly try to labour for my own living, if you will let me."

"Mighty fine, to be sure! Much you're good for, aren't you? I wish you'd get along to bed. My temper is too good to bear malice, and I shall forget all about it to-morrow perhaps; but I can't abide to look at you to-night after such a speech as that. . . . there's the truth; so get to bed that's a good girl, as fast as you can. . . . There are some things too much even for an angel to bear!"

Agnes crept to her little bed, and soon cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONDITIONS OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN MRS. PETERS AND HER DAUGHTERS. — MRS. BARNABY BEGINS HER FASHIONABLE CAREER UNDER THE PROTECTION OF MISS ELIZABETH. — SHE RENUNCIATES A BALL IN HER HEART AS SHE EXAMINES THE ROOM. — THE LIBRARY.

MRS. BARNABY was quite right in thinking that the Peters family would be very useful acquaintance; for prodigiously as Mrs. Peters disliked her sister-in-law, she no sooner ceased to be galled by her unwelcome presence in her house, than she recovered her good-humour, and felt as much aware as any reasonable person could desire, of the claim her brother's widow really had upon her and her family. These excellent

dispositions were assiduously fostered by her daughters, to whose wishes she never turned a deaf ear. She found the eldest and the youngest very seriously interested in Agnes, and earnest in their desire to see more of her; while Elizabeth persevered in her belief that poor Mrs. Barnaby was one of the very best-hearted women in the world, and very much to be pitied, because nobody seemed to like her. . . . though she *did* mean to divide her fortune so generously amongst them.

"I hope, mamma," said the eldest Miss Peters, when the ladies of the family were sitting round the drawing-room fire after dinner, "I hope that you will overcome your terror of Mrs. Barnaby and her rouge sufficiently before Tuesday night to permit her joining our party in the ball-room, for I would not forsake that sweet Agnes upon such an occasion for more than I will say."

"Why, I do feel my spirits revive, Mary, considerably, since I have felt quite certain that none of my dear sister's amiable feelings were likely to involve me in the necessity of enduring her presence in my house for evermore. You may fancy you exaggerate, perhaps, when you talk of my terrors; . . . but no such thing, believe me. It was terror she inspired, and nothing short of it."

"And Agnes, mamma? . . . what did she inspire?" said Mary.

"Pity and admiration," replied her mother.

"Very well, then," returned the petted girl, kissing her, "we shall not quarrel this time; but I was half afraid of it. It would, in truth, have been very foolish, and very unlike you, mamma, who understand the sort of thing better than most people, I believe, if we had lost the great pleasure of being kind to Miss Willoughby, and behaved extremely ill to uncle Barnaby's widow into the bargain, solely because you don't like tall massive ladies, with large black eyes, who wear rouge, and talk fine; . . . for you must confess, if you will be quite honest and speak the truth, that Mrs. Peters is rather too well established a person at Clifton, to fear losing caste by being seen with a Mrs. Barnaby, even had the association not been redeemed by the matchless elegance of her beautiful niece."

"Did any one ever hear a mamma better scolded?" said Mrs. Peters, turning to the younger girls.

"Mary is quite right, mamma," said Lucy. "Depend upon

it we should have broken into open rebellion had you persevered in threatening to cut the Barnaby connection."

"Indeed I must say," added Elizabeth, "that I have thought you very severe upon our poor aunt, mamma. Think of her kindness!"

"Our aunt!" sighed Mrs. Peters. "Is it absolutely necessary, beloveds! that she should be addressed in public by that tender title?"

"Not absolutely, perhaps," replied Mary, laughing; "and I dare say Elizabeth will make a bargain with you, mamma, never to call her aunt again, provided you promise never to forget that she is our aunt, though we may not call her so."

"And what must I do, young ladies, to prove my eternal recollection of this agreeable fact?"

"You must be very civil to Agnes, and let them both join our party at tea, and at all the balls, and never object to our calling upon the Barnaby, for the sake of getting at the Willoughby, and . . . now don't start, and turn restive, mamma, . . . you must ask them whenever we have an evening party here with young people, that might be likely to give Agnes pleasure."

"And must I embrace Mrs. Barnaby every time she comes into my presence, and every time she leaves it?"

"No, . . . unless you have done something so very outrageously rude before, as to render such a penitentiary *amende* necessary."

"Come here, Mary," said the gay mother, "and let me box your ears immediately."

The young lady placed herself very obediently on the foot-stool at Mrs. Peters's feet, who having patted each pretty cheek, said, "Now tell me, Mary, if you can, what it is that has thus fascinated your affections, hoodwinked your judgment, perverted your taste, and extinguished your pride?"

"If you will let me turn your questions my own way, mother," replied the daughter, "I will answer them all. My affection is fascinated, or, I would rather say, won, by the most remarkable combination of beauty, grace, talent, gentleness, and utter unconsciousness of it all, that it has ever been my hap to meet with. And, instead of being hoodwinked, *my judgment, my power of judging, seem newly roused and awakened by having so very fine a subject on which to exer-*

cise themselves. I never before felt, as I did when listening to Agnes as she innocently answered my prying questions concerning her past life, the enormous difference there might be between one human mind and another. It was like opening the pages of some holy book, and learning thence what truth, innocence, and sweet temper could make of us. If admiring the uncommon loveliness of this sweet girl with something of the enthusiasm with which one contemplates a choice picture, be perversion of taste, I plead guilty, for it is with difficulty that I keep my eyes away from her; . . . and for my pride, mamma, . . . if any feeling of the kind ever so poisoned my heart as to make me turn from what was good, in the fear that it might lead me into contact with what was ungentle, be thankful with me, that this sweet 'light from heaven' has crossed my path, and enabled me to see the error of my ways."

Mary spoke with great animation, and her mother listened to her till tears dimmed her laughing blue eyes.

"You are not a missish miss, Mary, that is certain," said she, kissing her, "and assuredly I thank Heaven for that. This pretty creature does indeed seem by your account to be a pearl of price; but, *par malheur*, she has got into the shell of the very vilest, great, big, coarse, hateful oyster, that ever was fished up! . . . Fear nothing more, however, from me. . . You are dear good girls for feeling as you do about this pretty Agnes, and I give you *carte blanche* to do what you will with her and for her."

The consequence of this was an early call made on the following morning at Mrs. Barnaby's lodgings by the three Misses Peters. There were not many subjects on which the aunt and niece thought or felt in common; but it would be difficult to say which of the two was most pleased when their visitors were announced.

"We are come—that is, Lucy and I—to make you take a prodigious long walk with us, Agnes," said Miss Peters; "and Elizabeth, who is not quite so stout a pedestrian as we are, is come with us, to offer her services to you, Mrs. Barnaby, for a home circuit, if you like to make one. And pray do not forget that Tuesday is the ball night, and that we shall expect you to go, and join our party in the room."

"Dearest Mary! . . . dearest Elizabeth! . . . dearest

Lucy! How good of you all! Agnes, put on your bonnet, my dear, instantly, and never forget the kindness of these dear girls. . . . I shall, indeed, be thankful to you, Elizabeth, if you will put me in the way of getting a few trifles that will be necessary for Tuesday. . . . Are your balls large? Are there plenty of gentlemen" &c. &c.

And where was Agnes's heavy sense of sadness now? The birds, whose cheerful songs seemed to call her out, were not more light of heart than herself, as she followed her friends down the stairs, and sprung through the door to meet the fresh breeze from the down with a foot almost as elastic as their own glad wings. We must leave the young ladies to pursue their way, being joined at no great distance from the door by James Peters, through a long and delightful ramble that took them along "the wall," that forms the *garde fou* to the most beautiful point of Durdham Down, and so on amidst fields and villas that appeared to Agnes like so many palaces in fairy-land; and while thus they charm away the morning, we must follow Mrs. Barnaby and the good-natured Elizabeth through their much more important progress among the fashionable resorts of the Clifton *beau monde*.

"And about tickets, my dear Elizabeth?" said the widow, as she offered her substantial arm to her slight companion; "what is it the fashion to do? To subscribe for the season, or pay at the door?"

"You may do either, Mrs. Barnaby; but if you wish your arrival to be known, I believe you had better put your name on the book."

"You are quite right, my dear. Where is the place to do this? Cannot you take me at once?"

"Yes, I could take you, certainly, for it is almost close by; but perhaps papa had better save you the trouble, Mrs. Barnaby?"

"By no means, my dear. His time is more valuable than mine. Let us go at once: I shall like it best."

Elizabeth, though a little frightened, led the way; and as Mrs. Barnaby entered the establishment that at its very threshold seemed to her redolent of wax-lights, fiddles, and fine clothes, such a delightful flutter of spirits came upon her, as drove from her memory the last fifteen or sixteen years of her life, and made her feel as if she were still one of the lightest and

loveliest nymphs in the world. She insisted upon seeing the ball-room, and paced up and down its ample extent with a step that seemed with difficulty restrained from dancing; she examined the arrangement for the music, looked up with exultation at the chandeliers, and triumphed in anticipation at their favourable influence upon rouge, eyes, feathers, and flowers. Had there been any other man present beside the waiter, she would hardly have restrained her desire to make a *tour de valts*; and, as it was, she could not help turning to the quiet young man, and saying with a condescending smile, "The company must look very well in this room, sir?"

As they passed in their way out through the room in which the subscription-books were kept, they met a gentleman, whose apparent age wavered between thirty-five and forty, tall, stout, gaily dressed, fully moustached, and with an eye that looked as if accustomed to active service in reconnoitring all things. He took off his hat, and bowed profoundly to Miss Peters, bestowing at the same time a very satisfactory glance on the widow.

"Who is that, my dear?" said the well-pleased lady.

"That is Major Allen," replied Elizabeth.

"Upon my word, he is a very fine, fashionable-looking man. Is he intimate with your family?"

"Oh no! . . . We only know him from meeting him sometimes at parties, and always at the balls."

"Is he a man of fortune?" — "I am sure I don't know. He has got a smart horse and groom, and goes a great deal into company."

"Then of course he cannot be a poor man, my dear. Is he a dancer?"

"No. . . I believe he always plays cards."

"And where shall we go now, dearest? . . . I want you to take me, Elizabeth, to all the smartest shops you know."

"Some of the best shops are at Bristol, but we have a very good milliner here."

"Then let us go there, dear: . . . And did not your mamma say something about a library?"

"Yes, there's the library, and almost every body goes there almost every morning."

"Then there of course I shall go. I consider it as so completely a duty my dear Elizabeth, to do all these sort of

things for the sake of my niece. My fortune is a very good one, and the doing as other people of fortune do, must be an advantage to poor dear Agnes as long as she is with me; . . . but I don't scruple to say to you, my dear, that the fortune I received from your dear uncle will return to his family in case I die without children. . . . And a truly widowed heart, my dear girl, does not easily match itself again. But the more you know of me, Elizabeth, the more you will find that I have many notions peculiar to myself. Many people, if they were mistress of my fortune, would spend three times as much as I do; but I always say to myself, "Poor dear Mr. Barnaby, though he loved me better than any thing else on earth, loved his own dear sister and her children next best; and therefore, as he left all to me . . . and a very fine fortunes he made, I assure you . . . I hold myself in duty bound, as I spend a great deal of money with one hand upon my own niece, to save a great deal with the other for his."

"I am sure you seem to be very kind and good to every body," replied the grateful young lady.

"That is what I would wish to be, my dear, for it is only so that we can do our duty. . . . Not that I would ever pledge myself never to marry again, my dear Elizabeth. I don't at all approve people making promises that it may be the will of Heaven they should break afterwards; and those people are not the most likely to keep a resolution, who vow and swear about it. But I hope you will never think me stingy, my dear, nor let any body else think me so, for not spending above a third of my income, or perhaps not quite so much; for, now you know my motives, you must feel that it would be very ungenerous, particularly in your family, to blame me for it."

"It would, indeed, Mrs. Barnaby, and it is what I am sure that I, for one, should never think of doing. . . . But this is the milliner's. . . . Shall we go in?"

"Oh yes! A very pretty shop indeed; quite in good style. What a sweet turban! If it was not for the reasons that I tell you, I should certainly be tempted, Elizabeth. Pray, ma'am, what is the price of this scarlet turban?"

"*Four guineas* and a half, ma'am, with the bird, and two *guineas* without it."

"It is a perfect gem! Pray, ma'am, do you ever make up ladies' own materials?"

"No, ma'am, never," replied the decisive *artiste*.

"Do you never fasten in feathers? . . . I should not mind paying for it, as I see your style is quite first-rate."

"For our customers, ma'am, and whenever the feathers or the coiffure have been furnished in the first instance by ourselves."

"You are a customer, Elizabeth, are you not?"

"Mamma is," replied the young lady. "You know Mrs Peters of Rodney Place, Mrs. Duval?"

"Oh yes! . . . I beg your pardon, Miss Peters. Is this lady a friend of yours?"

"Mrs. Peters is my sister-in-law, Mrs. Duval, and I hope that will induce you to treat me as if I had already been a customer. I should like to have some feathers, that I mean to wear at the ball on Tuesday, fastened into my toque, like these in this blue one here. Will you do this for me?"

"Yes, ma'am, certainly, if you will favour us with your name on our books."

"That's very obliging, and I will send my own maid with it as soon as I get home."

"Is there any thing else I can have the pleasure of showing you, ladies?"

"I want some long white gloves, if you please, and something light and elegant in the way of a scarf."

The *modiste* was instantly on the alert, and the counter became as a sea of many-coloured waves.

"Coloured scarves are sometimes worn in slight mourning, I believe, are they not?" — "Oh yes! ma'am, always."

"What do you say to this one, Elizabeth?" said the widow, selecting one of a brilliant geranium tint.

"For yourself, Mrs. Barnaby?" — "Yes, my dear. . . . My dress will be black satin, you know."

"I should think white would look better," said Elizabeth, recollecting her mother's aversion to fine colours, and recollecting also the recent weeds of her widowed aunt.

"Well, . . . perhaps it might. Let me see some white, if you please."

"Perhaps you would like blonde, ma'am?" said the milliner, opening a box, and displaying some tempting specimens.

"Beautiful indeed! . . . very! . . . What is the price of this one?"

"A mere trifle, ma'am. . . . Give me leave to begin your account with this."

"Well, I really think I must. . . . I know they clean as good as new."

"What is Agnes to wear?" inquired Elizabeth.

"There is one of my troubles, my dear; she will wear nothing but the deepest mourning. Between you and me, Elizabeth, I suspect it is some feeling about her poor mother, or else for her father, who has never been heard of for years, but whom we all suppose to have died abroad, — I suspect it is some feeling of this sort that makes her so very obstinate about it. But she can't bear to have it talked of, so don't say a word to her on the subject, or she will be out of sorts for a week, and will think it very cruel of me to have named it to you. I perfectly dote upon that girl, Elizabeth, . . . though, to be sure, I have my trials with her! But we have all our trials, Elizabeth! . . . and, thank Heaven! I have a happy temper, and bear mine, I believe, as well as most people. But about that strange whim that Agnes has, of always wearing crape and bombasin, you may as well just mention it to your mamma and sisters, to prevent their taking any notice of it to her; for if they did, you may depend upon it she would not go to the ball at all. . . . Oh! you have no idea of the obstinacy of that darling girl! . . . These gloves will do at last, I think. . . . Your gloves are all so remarkably small, Mrs. Duval! . . . And that's all for this morning."

"Where shall I send them, ma'am, and to what name?"

"To Mrs. Barnaby, No. 1. Sion Row."

"Thank you, ma'am. . . . They shall be sent immediately."

"Now then, Elizabeth, for the library," said the widow with an expressive flourish of the hand.

And to the library they went, which to Mrs. Barnaby's great satisfaction was full of smart people, and, amongst others, she had to make her way past the mustached Major Allen, in order to reach the table on which the subscription-book was laid.

"I beg your pardon, madam, a thousand times!" said the Major; "I am afraid I trod on your foot!"

"Don't mention it! . . . it is of no consequence in the

world! The shop is so full it is almost impossible to avoid it."

The Major in return for this civil speech again fixed his broad, wide, open eyes upon the widow, and she had again the satisfaction of believing that he thought her particularly handsome.

Miss Peters found many of her acquaintance among the crowd, with whom she conversed, while Mrs. Barnaby seated herself at the table, and turned over page after page of autographs with the air of a person deeply interested by the hope of finding the names of friends and acquaintance among them, whereas it would have been a circumstance little short of a miracle had she found there that of any individual whom she had ever seen in her life; but she performed her part admirably, smiling from time to time, as if delighted at an unexpected recognition. Meanwhile many an eye, as she well knew, was fixed upon her, for her appearance was in truth sufficiently striking. She was tall, considerably above the average height, and large, though not to corpulency; in short, her figure was what many people, like Mr. Peters, would call that of a fine woman; and many others, like Mrs. Peters, would declare to be large, ungainly, and vulgar. Her features were decidedly handsome, her eyes and teeth fine, and her nose high and well-formed; but all this was exaggerated into great coarseness by the quantity of rouge she wore, and the redundancy of harsh-looking, coal-black ringlets which depended heavily down each side of her large face, so as still to give a striking resemblance, as Agnes, it may be remembered, discovered several years before, to the wax heads in a hair-dresser's shop. This sort of face and figure, which were of themselves likely enough to draw attention, were rendered still more conspicuous by her dress, which, though, like herself really handsome, was rendered unpleasing by its glaring purpose of producing effect. A bonnet of bright lavender satin, extravagantly large, and fearfully thrown back, displayed a vast quantity of blonde quilling, fully planted with flowers of every hue, while a prodigious plume of drooping feathers tossed themselves to and fro with every motion of her head, and occasionally reposed themselves on her shoulder. Her dress was of black silk, but ingeniously relieved by the introduction of as many settings off, of the same colour with her

bonnet, as it was well possible to contrive; so that, although in mourning, her general appearance was exceedingly showy and gay.

"Who is your friend, Elizabeth?" said a young lady, who seemed to have the privilege of questioning freely.

"It is Mrs. Barnaby," replied Miss Peters in a whisper.

"And who is Mrs. Barnaby, my dear? . . . She has quite the air of a personage."

"She is the widow of mamma's brother, Mr. Barnaby of Silverton."

"Silverton? . . . That's the name of her place, is it? . . . She is a lady of large fortune, I presume?"

"Yes, she is, Miss Maddox," replied Elizabeth, somewhat scandalised by the freedom of these inquiries; "but I really wish you would not speak so loud, for she must hear you."

"Oh no! . . . You see she is very busy looking for her friends. Good morning, Major!" said the same fair lady, turning to Major Allen, who stood close beside her, listening to all her inquiries and to the answers they received. "Are we to have a good ball on Tuesday?"

"If all the world can be made to know that Miss Maddox will be there, all the world will assuredly be there to meet her," replied the gentleman.

"Then I commission you to spread the tidings far and near. I wonder if there will be many strangers?"

"Some of the Stephenson and Hubert party, I hear—that is, Colonel Hubert and young Frederick Stephenson—they are the only ones left. The bridal party set off from the Mall this morning at eleven o'clock. Lady Stephenson looked more beautiful than ever."

"Lady Stephenson? . . . Oh! Emily Hubert . . . Yes, she is very handsome; and her brother is vastly like her."

"Do you think so? . . . He is so thin and weather-beaten . . . so very like an old soldier."

"I don't like him the worse for that," replied the lady. "He looks as if he had seen service, and were the better for it. He is decidedly the handsomest man at Clifton."

The major smiled, and turned on his heel, which brought him exactly *vis-à-vis* to Miss Elizabeth Peters.

"Your party mean to honour the ball on Tuesday, I hope, Miss Peters?"

"I believe so, Major Allen. It is seldom that we are not some of us there."

"Shall you bring us the accession of any strangers?" inquired the major.

"Mrs. Barnaby and her niece will be with us, I think."

"I flatter myself that altogether we shall muster strong. Good morning!" and with another sidelong glance at the widow, Major Allen walked out of the shop.

Not a word of all this had been lost upon Mrs. Barnaby. She had thought from the very first that Elizabeth Peters must be selected as her particular friend, and now she was convinced that she would be invaluable in that capacity. It was quite impossible that any one could have answered better to questions than she had done. It was impossible, too, that any thing could be more fascinating than the general appearance of Major Allen; and if, upon farther inquiry, it should prove that he was indeed, as he appeared to be, a man of fashion and fortune, the whole world could not offer her a lover she should so passionately desire to captivate!

Such were the meditations of Mrs. Barnaby as she somewhat pensively sat at her drawing-room window, awaiting the return of Agnes to dinner on that day; and such were very frequently her meditations afterwards.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING A YOUNG LADY'S APPEARANCE AT A BALL—
A WET SUNDAY. — DIFFERENCE OF TASTE.

THOUGH it was two minutes and a half past the time named for dinner when Agnes made her appearance, she found her aunt's temper very slightly acerbated by the delay, for the delightful recollections of her morning expedition still endured, and she was more inclined to boast than to scold.

"Well, Agnes, I hope at last I have some news that will please you," she said. "What think you of my having subscribed for us both for six weeks?"

"Subscribed for what, aunt? . . . to the library?"

"Yes; I have subscribed there, too, for a month . . . and we must go every day, rain or shine, to make it answer. But I have done a good deal more than that for you, my dear; I have subscribed to the balls entirely for your sake, Agnes; and whatever becomes of you in future life, I trust you will never forget all I have done for you now."

"But I am afraid, aunt, it will cost you a great deal of money to take me with you to the balls; and as I have never been yet, I cannot know any thing about it, you know; and I do assure you that I shall not at all mind being left at home."

"And a pretty story that would make, wouldn't it? . . . tell you, child, I *have* paid the money already . . . and here are the cutlets; so sit down, and be thankful for all my kindness to you. . . Is my beer come, Jerningham?"

Agnes sat down, and began eating her cutlet; but it was thoughtfully, for there were cares that rested heavily upon her heart; and though they were certainly of a minor species, she must be forgiven if at sixteen and a half they were sufficient to perplex her sorely. She had neither shoes nor gloves fit to appear at a ball. She dared not ask for them, she dared not go without them, and she dared not refuse to go at all.

"This certainly is the most beautiful place I ever saw in my life!" said the widow, while renewing her attack upon the dish of cutlets; "such shops! . . . such a milliner! and, as for the library, it's perfectly like going into public! What an advantage it is every morning of one's life to be able to go to such a place as that! Elizabeth Peters seemed to know every body; and I heard them talking of people of the highest fashion, as some of those we are sure to meet at the ball. What an immense advantage it is for you, Agnes, to be introduced in such a manner at such a place as this!"

"It is indeed a most beautiful place, aunt, and the Peterses are most kind and charming people."

"Then for once in your life, child, you are pleased! . . . that's a comfort . . . And I have got something to show you, Agnes; such a scarf! . . . real French blonde: . . . it's monstrous expensive, I'm afraid; but every body says that the respectability of a girl depends entirely upon the style of her chaperon. I'm sure I would no more let my poor dear sister's child go out with me, if I was shabbily dressed, than I would fly. I wonder Mrs. Duval does not send home my things; but perhaps she waits for me to send my turban. She's going to put my feathers in for me, Agnes,—quite a favour, I assure you; . . . but she was so respectful in her manner to Elizabeth Peters. I am sure, if I had had any notion what sort of people they were, I should have made Barnaby leave this business to Mr. Dobbs for a little while, that he might have brought me to see them long ago."

"It is indeed a pleasure to meet with such friends," said Agnes; "and perhaps . . ."

"Perhaps what, child?"

"If either of the three girls stay away from the ball, perhaps, aunt, you would be so kind as to let me stay away too, and we should pass the evening so delightfully together."

"God give me patience, Agnes, for I'm sure you are enough to drive one wild. Here have I been subscribing to the balls, and actually paying down ready money beforehand for your tickets; and now, ungrateful creature that you are, you tell me you wo'n't go! . . . I only wish the Peterses could hear you, and then they'd know what you are."

"My only objection to going to the ball, aunt," said Agnes with desperate courage, "is, the fear that you would be obliged to get gloves and shoes for me."

“Gloves and shoes! . . . why, that’s just the advantage of mourning. You’ll have my black silk stockings, you know, all except a pair or two of the best,—and with black stockings I don’t suppose you would choose to put on white shoes. That would be rather too much in the magpie style, I suppose, wouldn’t it? . . . And for gloves, I don’t see how, in such *very* deep mourning, you would wear any thing but black gloves too; and there are two pair of mine that you may have. I could lend you an old pair of my black satin shoes too, only your feet and your hands are so frightfully out of proportion to your height. . . . I was always reckoned to be most perfectly in proportion, every part of my figure; but your hands and feet are absolutely ridiculous from their smallness: you take after your father in that, and a great misfortune it is, for it will prevent your ever profiting by my shoes or my gloves either, unless you are clever enough to take them in,—and that I don’t believe you are—not fingers and all. . . .”

“May I wear long sleeves then, aunt?” said Agnes with considerable animation, from having suddenly conceived a project, by means of which she thought she might render herself and her sables presentable.

“Because you have got no long gloves, I suppose? Why yes, child, I see no objection, in such *very* deep mourning as yours. It is a strange whim you have taken, Agnes; but it is certainly very convenient.”

“And will you give me leave, aunt, to use all the black you have been so kind as to give me?”

“Use it? . . . use all of it? . . . Yes; I don’t want to have any of it again: the great desire of my life is to be liberal and generous to you in all ways, Agnes. But I don’t know what you mean about using it all,—you can’t mean all the things at once?”

“No, aunt,” replied Agnes, laughing, “I don’t mean that; but if I may use the crape that covers nearly the whole of your best gown, I think I could make my own frock look very well, for I would make it the same as one I saw last year at Empton. May I?”

“Yes, if you will, child; but to say the truth, I have no great *faith* in your mantua-making talents. However, I am glad that you have got such a notion in your head; and if

it turns out well, I may set you to work for me perhaps one of these days. I have a great deal of taste in that way; but with my fortune it would be ridiculous if I did much beside ornamental work. . . . There . . . Take away, Jerningham, and bring the two cheesecakes. . . . Agnes, do you wish for one?"

"No, thank you, aunt."

"What an odd girl you are! . . . You never seem to care about what you eat. . . . I must say that I am a little more dainty, and know what is nice, and like it too. But poor dear Barnaby spoilt me in that way; and if ever you should be lucky enough to be the idol of a husband, as I was, you will learn to like nice eating too, Agnes . . . for it is a thing that grows upon one, I believe. But I dare say at the out-of-the-way place your aunt Betsy put you to, there was no great chance of your being over-indulged that way. . . . That will do, Jerningham, give me that drop of beer; and now eat up your own dinner as fast as you can, and ask little Kitty to show you the way to Mrs. Duval's, the milliner; and take with you, very carefully mind, the hat-box that you will find ready tied up on my bed, and bring back with you my new scarf and gloves. . . . I long to show you my scarf, Agnes. . . . You shall not be ashamed of your chaperon,—that's a point I'm resolved upon."

It was Saturday night, and the important ball was to be on the following Tuesday; so Agnes, as soon as the dinner was ended, hastened to set about her work, a general idea of which she had very clearly in her little head, but felt some misgivings about her skill in the detail.

Hardly, however, had she brought forth "her needle and her shears," when her aunt exclaimed,—

"Good gracious, child! . . . you are not going to set to work now? . . . Why, it is the pleasantest part of the day, and I mean to take you out to walk with me under the windows where we saw all the smart people last night.—Just look out, and you will see they are beginning to come already. Put on your things, my dear; and put your bonnet a little back, and try to look as smart as you can. You are certainly very pretty, but you are a terrible dowdy in your way of putting on your things. You have nothing jaunty and taking *about you, as I used to have at your age, Agnes; and I'm*

sure I don't know what to do to improve you. . . . I suspect that your aunt will get more eyes upon her now than you will with all your youth,—and that's a shame. . . . But I always was famous for putting on my things well."

Agnes retired to her little room; but her quiet bonnet was put on much as usual when she came out from it; and Mrs. Barnaby might have been discouraged at seeing the very undashing appearance of her companion, had she not been conscious that the manner in which she had repaired her own charms, and the general style of her dress and person, was such as might well atone for it.

Nor was she disappointed as to the degree of attention she expected to draw; not a party passed them without giving her a decided stare, and many indulged their curiosity by a very pertinacious look over the shoulder after them.

This was very delightful, but it was not all: ere they had taken half a dozen turns, the widely-roaming eyes of Mrs. Barnaby descried two additional gentlemen, decidedly the most distinguished-looking personages she had seen, approaching from the farther end of the walk.

"That tall one is the man we watched last night, Agnes: I should know him amongst a thousand."

Agnes looked up, and felt equally convinced of the fact.

The two gentlemen approached; and Mrs. Barnaby herself could not have wished for a look of more marked examination than the tall individual bestowed upon her as he went by: but satisfactory as this was, and greatly as it occupied her attention, she was aware also that his companions looked with equal attention at Agnes.

"For goodness' sake, Agnes, throw back that abominable veil; it is getting quite dark already, and I'm sure you cannot see."

"I can see very well, thank you, aunt," replied Agnes.

"Fool!" . . . muttered Mrs. Barnaby; but she would not spoil her features by a frown, and continued to enjoy for three turns more the repeated gaze of the tall gentleman.

The following day being Sunday was one of great importance to strangers about to be initiated into the society of the place; and Mrs. Barnaby had fondly flattered herself that Mrs. Peters or at least the young ladies, would upon such an

occasion have extended their patronage, both to help them to a seat; and to tell them "who was who." But in this she was disappointed: in fact, a compact had been entered into between Mrs. Peters and her son and daughters, by which it was agreed that, on condition of her permitting them to join her party at the balls, she was always to be allowed to go to church in peace. This was so reasonable, that even the petted Mary submitted to it without a murmur; and the consequence was, that Mrs. Barnaby found herself left to her own devices as to the manner in which she should make the most of the Sabbath-day.

Fortunately for the tranquillity of Mrs. Peters, the landlady of the lodgings, on being questioned, gave it as her opinion that the chapel at the Hot Wells, which was within a very pleasant walk, would be more likely to offer accommodation to strangers than the parish church, that being always crowded by the resident families; so to the chapel at the Hot Wells Mrs. Barnaby resolved to go, and the tea-time was ordered half an hour earlier than usual; that time enough might be allowed to "get ready."

"Now do make the best of yourself, Agnes; to-day, will you? I am sure those men are not Bristol people. . . . So different they looked — didn't they? — from all the rest. Of course, you will put on your best crape bonnet, and one of my nicest broad-hemmed white crape collars . . . there is one I have quite clean . . . I have no doubt in the world we shall see them."

Having finished her breakfast, and reiterated those orders, Mrs. Barnaby turned her attention to her own toilet, and a most elaborate one it was, taking so long a time as to leave scarcely sufficient for the walk; but proving at length so perfectly satisfactory as to make her indifferent to that, or almost any other *contre-temps*.

On this occasion she came forth in a new dress of light grey gros-de-Naples, with a gay bonnet of *psille de riz*, decorated with poppy blossoms both within and without, a "ladylike" profusion of her own embroidery on cuffs, collar, and pocket-handkerchief, her well-oiled ringlets half hiding her large, coarse, handsome face, her eyes set off by a suffusion of carmine, and her whole person redolent of musk.

This was the figure beside which Agnes was doomed to

make her first appearance at the crowded chapel of the Hot Wells. Had she thought about herself, the contrast its expansive splendour offered to her own slight figure, her delicate fair face seen but by stealth through her thick veil, and the sad decorum of her sable robe, might have struck her as being favourable; instead of that, however, it was another contrast that occurred to her; for, as she looked at Mrs. Barnaby, she suddenly recollected the general look and air of her aunt Compton, just at the moment when the widow attacked her so violently on the meanness of her apparel during their terrible encounter at the village school, and she could not quite restrain a sigh as she thought how greatly she should have preferred entering a crowded and fashionable chapel with her.

But no sighing could effect the change, and they set forth together, as strangely a matched pair in appearance as can well be imagined. They entered the crowded building just as the Psalms concluded, and were stared at and scrutinised with quite as much attention as was consistent with the solemnity of the place: moreover, seats were after some time offered to them, and there was no reason in the world to believe that they were in any way overlooked. Nevertheless Mrs. Barnaby was disappointed. Neither the tall gentleman nor his companion were there; nor did Major Allen, or any one like him, appear to reward her labour and her skill.

Long and wearisome did the steep up-hill walk back to her lodgings appear after this unpropitious act of devotion, and sadly passed the remainder of the day, for it rained hard . . . no strollers, not even an idle *endimanché*, came to awaken the musical echo she loved to listen to from the pavement under the windows. In short, it was a day of existence lost, save that she found out one or two new defects in Agnes, and ended at last by very nearly convincing herself that it was in some way or other her fault that it rained.

But happily nothing lasts for ever in this world, and Agnes found herself quietly in bed at last.

The next morning rose bright in sunshine, and the widow rose too, and "blessed the useful light," which she determined should see her exactly at the fashionable hour take her way to the library, and the pastry-cook's, or wherever else she was *most* likely to be seen; but, fortunately for the *refacimento upon which Agnes* desired to employ herself, this fashionable

hour was not early, and her sable draperies had made great progress before her aunt gave notice that she must get ready to go out with her. To have a voice upon any question of this kind had fortunately never yet occurred to Agnes as a thing possible, and once more, like a *bella donna* beside a holy-hock, she appeared, with all the effect of the strongest contrast, in the gayest part of Clifton.

This day seemed sent by fate to make up for the misfortunes of the last. On entering the library, Mrs. Barnaby immediately placed herself before the autographic volume in which she took such particular interest, and hardly had she done so, when the tall and the short gentlemen entered the shop. Again it was decidedly evident that the tall one fixed his eyes on the widow, and the shorter one on her companion. The widow's heart beat. Never had she forgotten the evident admiration her own face and manner produced on her fellow-traveller from Silverton, or the chilling effect that followed the display of the calm features of her delicate niece. She knew that Agnes was younger, and perhaps even handsomer, than herself; but this only tended to confirm her conviction that an animated expression of countenance, and great vivacity of manner, would do more towards turning a young man's head than all the mere beauty in the world.

What would she have given at that moment for some one with whom she might have conversed with laughing gaiety . . . to whom she might have displayed her large white teeth . . . and on whom she might have turned the flashings of her lustrous eyes!

It was in vain to look to Agnes at such a moment as this, for she well knew that nothing she could utter would elicit any better excuse for laughter than might be found in "Yes, aunt," or "No, aunt." So nothing was to be done but to raise a glass recently purchased to her eye, in order to recognise the unknown passers-by; but in doing this she contrived to make "le petit doigt" show off her rings, and now and then cast such a glance at the strangers as none but a Mrs. Barnaby can give.

After this dumb show had lasted for some minutes, the two gentlemen each threw down the newspaper they had affected to read, and departed. Mrs. Barnaby's interest in the subscription-book departed likewise; and after looking at the

backs of one or two volumes that lay scattered about the counter, she, too, left the shop, and proceeded with a dignified and leisurely step along the pavement. The next moment was one of the happiest of her life, for on turning her head to reconnoitre a richly-trimmed mantilla that had passed her, she perceived the same pair of gentlemen at the distance of two paces behind them.

This indeed was an adventure, and to the widow's unspeakable delight it was made more piquant still by what followed. Near the end of the street was the well-frequented shop of a fashionable pastrycook,—an establishment, by the way, which Mrs. Barnaby had not yet lived long enough to pass with indifference, for the two-fold reason, that it ever recalled the dear rencontres of her youth, when the disbursement of our penny was sure to secure a whole half hour of regimental flirting, and also because her genuine love for cakes and tarts was unextinguishable. There was now again a double reason for entering this inviting museum; for, in the first place, it would prevent the necessity of turning round as soon as they had walked up the street, in order to walk down it again, thereby proving that they had no engagements at all; and, secondly, it would give the two uncommonly handsome men an opportunity of following them in, if they liked it.

And it so happened that they did like it. Happy Mrs. Barnaby! . . . No sooner had she seated herself beside the counter, with a plate of queencakes and Bath buns beside her, than the light from the door ceased to pour its unbroken splendour upon her elegant dress, and on looking up, her eye again met the gaze first of the one, and then of the other stranger, as they entered the shop together.

Agnes was standing behind her, with her face rather unmeaningly turned towards the counter, for when a plate with various specimens of pastry delicacies was offered to her by one of the shopwomen, she declined to take anything by a silent bow.

The two gentlemen passed her, and established themselves at a little table just beyond, desiring that ices might be brought to them.

"You have ices, have you?" said Mrs. Barnaby, delighted at an opportunity of speaking; . . . "bring me one, if you please." And then, trusting to her niece's well known dis-

cretion, she turned her chair, so as to front both Agnes and the two gentlemen, and said with great kindness of accent "Agnes, love! will you have an ice?"

"No, thank you, aunt," the anticipated reply, followed.

"Then sit down, dearest, will you? while I take mine."

The younger of the two gentlemen instantly sprang from his chair, and presented it to her. Agnes bowed civilly, but passed on to a bench which flanked the narrow shop on the other side; but Mrs. Barnaby smiled upon him most graciously, and said, bowing low as she sat, —

"Thank you, sir, very much you are extremely obliging."

The young man bowed again, reseated himself, and finished his ice in silence, when his companion having done the same, each laid a sixpence on the counter, and walked off.

"Who are those gentlemen, pray? do you know their names?" said Mrs. Barnaby eagerly to the shop-girl.

"The tall gentleman is Colonel Hubert, ma'am; and the other, young Mr. Stephenson."

"Stephenson," musingly repeated the widow, — "Stephenson and Hubert! I am sure I have heard the names before."

"Sir Edward Stephenson was married on Saturday to Colonel Hubert's sister, ma'am," said the girl, "and it is most likely that you heard of it."

"Oh, to be sure I did! I remember now all about it. . . . They said he was the handsomest man in the world — Colonel Hubert I mean and so he certainly is handsomer certainly than even Major Allen: don't you think so, Agnes?"

"I don't know Major Allen, aunt."

"Not know Major Allen, child? Oh! I remember no more you do, my dear come, get up; I have done. . . . The young man, Agnes," she said, turning to her niece as they left the shop, "seemed, I thought, a good deal struck by you. I wish to goodness, child, you would not always keep that thick veil over your face so. . . . It is a very handsome veil I know, and certainly makes your mourning

look very elegant ; but it is only in some particular lights that one can see your face under it at all."

"I don't think that signifies much, aunt, and it makes me feel so much more comfortable."

"Comfortable! . . . very well, child, poke along, and be comfortable your own way . . . but you certainly have a little spice of the mule in you."

The widow was perhaps rather disappointed at seeing no more of the two strangers ; they had turned off just beyond the pastrycook's shop, and were no longer visible ; but, while she follows in gentle musings her walk home, we will pursue the two gentlemen who had so captivated her attention.

The only resemblance between them was in the decided air of *bon ton* that distinguished both ; in every other respect they were perfectly dissimilar. Mr. Stephenson, the shorter and younger of the two, had by far the more regular set of features, and was indeed remarkably handsome. Colonel Hubert, his companion, appeared to be at least ten years his senior, and looked bronzed by the effect of various climates. He had perhaps no peculiar beauty of feature except his fine teeth, and the noble expression of his forehead, from which, however, the hair had already somewhat retired, though it still clustered in close brown curls round his well-turned head. But his form and stature were magnificent, and his general appearance so completely that of a soldier and a gentleman, that it was impossible, let him appear where he would, that he should pass unnoticed . . . which perhaps to the gentlemanly minded may be considered as some excuse for Mrs. Barnaby's enthusiastic admiration.

"For Heaven's sake, Hubert!" said the junior to the senior, as they paced onwards, "do give me leave to know a pretty girl when I see one. . . . In my life I never beheld so beautiful a creature! . . . Her form, her feet, her movement, — and what a voice!"

"Assuredly," said Colonel Hubert in reply to this tirade, "the sweet variety of tone, the charming change of her musical cadences, must naturally excite your admiration. 'No, thank you, aunt,' . . . it was inimitable! You are quite right, Frederick ; such words could not be listened to with indifference."

"You are an odious, carping, old fusty musty bachelor,

and I hate you with all my heart and soul!" exclaimed the young man. "Upon my honour, Hubert, I shudder to think that some ten or a dozen years hence I may be as hard, cold, and insensible as you are now. . . . Tell me honestly, can you at all recollect what your feelings were at two-and-twenty on seeing such a being as that sable angel from whom you have just dragged me?"

"Perhaps not exactly; and besides, black angels were never the objects of my idolatry. But don't stamp your foot at me, and I will answer you seriously. I do not think that from the blissful time when I was sixteen, up to my present solemn five-and-thirty, I could ever have been tempted to look a second time at any miss under the chaperonship of such a dame as that feather and furbelow lady."

"Then why, in the name of common sense, did you gaze so earnestly at the furbelow lady herself?"

"To answer that truly, Frederick, would involve the confession of a peculiar family weakness."

"A family weakness! . . . Pray, be confidential; I will promise to be discreet; and indeed, as my brother has just made, as the newspapers say, a 'lovely bride' of your sister, I have some right to a participation in the family secrets. Come, disclose! . . . What family reason have you for choosing to gaze upon a great vulgar woman, verging towards forty, and refusing to look at a young creature, as beautiful as a houri, who happens to be in her company?"

"I suspect it is because I am near of kin to my mother's sister. . . . Did you never hear of the peculiarity that attaches to my respected aunt, Lady Elizabeth Norris? She scruples not to avow that she prefers the society of people who amuse her by their absurdities to every other."

"Oh yes! . . . I have heard all that from Edward, who has, I can tell you, been occasionally somewhat horrified at what the queer old lady calls her *soirées antithestiques*. But you don't mean to tell me, Hubert, that you ever take the fancy of surrounding yourself with all the greatest quizzes you can find, in compliment to your old aunt?"

"Why, no. . . . I do not go so far as that yet, and perhaps I sometimes wish that she did not either, for occasionally she carries the whim rather too far; yet I believe truly that I am *more likely to gaze with attention at a particularly ridiculous*

looking woman than at any young nymph under her protection . . . or possessing the awful privilege of calling her *jaune!*"

"A young nymph! . . . what a hateful phrase! Elegant, delicate creature! . . . I swear to you, Colonel Hubert, that you have lowered yourself very materially in my estimation by your want of tact in not immediately perceiving that, although a nepotine connection unhappily exists between them, by marriage probably, or by the half blood, there must still be something very peculiar in the circumstances which have brought so incongruous a pair together."

"Well, Frederick, you may be right . . . and perhaps, my friend, my eyes begin to fail me; for, to tell you the truth, your adorable crape veil was too thick for me to see anything through it."

"To be sure it was!" cried Stephenson, quite delighted at the *amende*; "I thought it was impossible you could under-rate such a face as that."

"It is a great blessing to have young eyes," rejoined the colonel, relapsing into his bantering tone.

"What! . . . At it again, thou crusty old *Mars*? . . . Then I leave you."

"*Au revoir*, my Corydon!" . . . and so they parted.

CHAPTER II.

THE BALL.

THE evening of the ball, so much dreaded by the niece, and so much longed for by the aunt, arrived at last; and by a chance not over common in the affairs of mortals, while the hopes of the one lady were more than realised, the fears of the other were proved to be altogether groundless. Many favourable accidents, indeed, concurred to lessen the difficulties anticipated by Agnes. In the first place, her almost funeral robes (for which, if the truth be avowed she had not the slightest partiality) assumed an appearance, under her tasteful fancy, which surprised even herself; for though, when she set about it, she had a sort of *beau idéal* of a black crape robe floating in her imagination, her hopes of giving it form and substance by her own ingenuity were not very san-

guine. Mrs. Barnaby, either from the depth of her sorrow, or the height of her elegance, had commanded, when she ordered her widow's mourning, that one dress should touch the heart of every beholder by having a basement of sable crape one yard in breadth around it. This doleful dress was costly, and had been rarely worn at Silverton, that it might come forth in great splendour at Exeter. But at Exeter, as we have seen, the widow's feelings so completely overpowered her, that she could not wear it at all, and thus it came under the fingers of Agnes in very respectable condition. Of these circum-ambulatory ells of crape, the young artificer contrived to fabricate a dress that was anything but unbecoming. The enormous crape *gigots* (for those were the days of *gigots*); which made part of her black treasure, hung from her delicate fair arms like transparent clouds upon the silvery brightness of the moon . . . so, at least, would Frederick Stephenson have described it . . . while the simple corsage, drawn *à la vierge* rather higher than fashion demanded round her beautiful bust, gave a delicate and sober dignity to her appearance, that even those who would have deemed it "a pity to be so covered up" themselves, could not but allow was exceedingly becoming.

As soon as her labour was ended she prudently made an experiment of its effect; and then, in "trembling hope" of her aunt's approval, made her appearance before her. Her success here perfectly astonished her.

"Mercy on me, child! — What an elegant dress! — Where on earth did you get it from?"

"From your gown, aunt."

"Oh, to be sure! — I understand. It is not many people that would give away such a dress as that, Agnes — perfectly new, and so extremely elegant. I hope it won't turn your brain, my dear, and that you will never forget who gave it to you. Certainly I never thought you so handsome before; and if you will but study my manner a little, and smile, and show your fine teeth, I do really think I may be able to get a husband for you, which would certainly be more creditable than going out as a governess. . . . So you *can* work, Agnes, I see . . . and a good thing too, considering your poverty. It does not look amiss upon the whole, I must say; though I don't see any reason for your covering yourself up so; I am sure your neck is white enough to be seen, and it would be odd if it

wasn't, considering who your mother was ; for both she and her were noted, far and near, for that beauty ; but I can't say I ever hid myself up in that way. . . . And what shoes, do you have you got to wear with it ?"

" These, aunt," said Agnes, putting out her little foot, encased in leather, with a sole of very respectable thickness.

" Well, upon my word, that's a pity . . . it spoils all . . . If and I don't think you could dance in them if you did get a partner. . . . What would you say, Agnes, if I bought you a pair of prunella pumps on purpose ?"

" I should be very much obliged to you, aunt."

" Well, then, for once I must be extravagant, I believe, so, get on your other gown, child, as quick as you can, and your bonnet and shawl, and let us go to the shop round the corner. I did not mean to stir out to-day . . . there is a wind enough to make one's eyes perfectly bloodshot. . . . However, the shop's close by. . . . Only, if you do marry well, I hope you will never forget what you owe me."

* * * * *

Agnes had been too hard at work to take any long walk, though invited to do it ; but her friend Mary called upon her both Monday and Tuesday ; and having found her way into the closet, seemed to think, as she pulled over Agnes's books, and chatted with her concerning their contents, that they might often enjoy themselves *tête-à-tête* there.

" Shall you like it, Agnes ?" she added, after sketching such a scheme to her.

" I think, Mary, you could make me like anything . . . but can I really make *you* like sitting in this cupboard, instead of your own elegant drawing-room ?"

" If you will sit with me here, my new friend," answered Miss Peters, with an air of great sincerity.

" Then must I not be wicked if I ever think myself unhappy again . . . at least, as long as we stay at Clifton ?"

" Dear girl ! . . . you should not be so, if I could help it. . . . But I must go . . . nine o'clock this evening, remember, and wait for us in the outer room, if you do not find us already there."

These instructions Agnes repeated to her aunt ; but that lady's ardent temper induced her to order a fly to be at her door at half-past eight precisely ; and when it arrived, she

was for at least the fourth time putting the last finishing touch to her blonde, and her feathers, and her ringlets, and her rouge, and therefore it took her not more than five minutes for a last general survey, before she declared herself "ready!" and Jerningham received orders to precede her down the stairs with a candle.

If the former descriptions of the widow's appearance have not been wholly in vain, the reader will easily conceive the increased splendour of her charms when elaborately attired for a ball, without my entering into any minutiae concerning them. Suffice it to say, that if the corsage of the delicate Agnes might have been deemed by some too high, that of Mrs. Barnaby might have been thought by others too low; and that, taken altogether, she looked exceedingly like one of the supplementary dames brought forth to do honour to the banquet scene in Macbeth.

Arriving half an hour before the time appointed, they, of course, did not find the Peters family; nor did this latter party make their appearance before the patience of Mrs. Barnaby had given way, and she had insisted, much to the vexation of Agnes, upon going on to the ball-room without them.

There the atmosphere was already in some degree congenial to her. The lustres were blazing, the orchestra tuning, and a few individuals, as impatient as herself, walking up and down the room, and appearing greatly delighted at having something new to stare at.

This parade was beginning to realise all the worst fears of Agnes (for the room was filling fast, and Mrs. Barnaby would not hear of sitting down), when she descried Mrs. Peters, her son, her three daughters, and two other gentlemen, enter the room.

Mrs. Barnaby saw them too, and instantly began to stride towards them; but timidity now made Agnes bold, and she held back, still courageously retaining her aunt's arm, and exclaiming eagerly,—

"Oh, let them come to us, aunt!"

"Nonsense, child! . . . Don't hold me so, Agnes; it will be exceedingly rude if we do not join them immediately, according to our engagement."

The pain of violently seizing upon Mrs. Peters was, how

ever, spared her by the watchful kindness of Mary, who caught sight of them immediately, and, together with Elizabeth, hastened forward to meet them.

Miss Peters gave a glance of approbation and pleasure at the appearance of Agnes, who did not look the less beautiful, perhaps, from the deep blush that dyed her cheeks as she marked the expression of Mrs. Peters' countenance, as she approached with her eyes fixed upon her aunt. That lady, however, let her have felt what she might at sight of her remarkable-looking sister-in-law, very honourably performed her part of the compact entered into with her daughters, smiling very graciously in return for her affectionate relative's raptures at seeing her, and showing no symptom of anything she felt on the occasion, excepting immediately retiring to the remotest corner of the room, where she very nearly hid herself behind a pillar.

Mrs. Barnaby of course followed her, with the young ladies, to the seat she had chosen; but her active genius was instantly set to work to discover how she might escape from it, for the feelings produced by such an eclipse were perfectly insupportable.

"I must pretend that I see some person whom I know," thought she, "and so make one of the girls walk across the room with me;" but at the instant she was about to put this project into execution, James Peters came up to the party, and very civilly addressed her. This was something, for the young man was handsome and well dressed; but better still was what happened next, for she immediately felt at once that she was about to become the heroine of an adventure. Major Ellen, whose appearance altogether, including moustaches, faguris, collier grec, embroidered waistcoat, and all, was very nearly as remarkable as her own, entered the room, looked round it, fixed his eyes upon her spangled turban, and very decisively turned off from the throng in order to pay his compliments to the Peters' party, distinguishing her by a bow that spake the profoundest admiration and respect. Elizabeth was the last of the row, her mother (with Mrs. Barnaby next her) being at the other end of it; and close to Elizabeth the dashing major placed himself, immediately entering into a whispered conversation with her, which obliged her to turn herself round from the rest, in such a manner that

not even Lucy, who came next in order, could overhear much of what passed. . . . Nevertheless, the widow felt as certain as if she could have followed every word of it, that this earnest conversation was about her.

Nor was she mistaken, for thus it ran:—

“Good evening, Miss Elizabeth. . . . You are just arrived, I presume. . . . An excellent ball, is it not? . . . I told you it would be. . . . What an exceedingly fine woman your aunt is, Miss Peters! . . . It is your aunt, I think?”

“Yes . . . our aunt, certainly . . . the widow of my mother’s brother, Major Allen.”

“Ay, . . . I understood she was your aunt. . . . She is a woman of large fortune, I hear?”

“Yes, very large fortune.”

“But she is in lodgings, is she not? . . . She does not seem to have taken the whole house.”

“Oh, no . . . only quite small lodgings: but she does not spend a third of her income, nor near it.”

“Really? . . . then, I suppose, handsome as she is, that she is a little in the skin-flint line, eh?” . . . And here the major showed his horse-like teeth by a laugh.

“Not that at all, I assure you,” replied the young lady, amiably anxious to exonerate her aunt from so vile an aspersions; “in deed, I should say quite the contrary; for she has very generous and noble ideas about money, and the use a widow ought to make of a fortune left by her husband, in case she does not happen to marry again. I am sure I hope people won’t be so ill-natured as to say she is stingy because she does not choose to spend all her income;—it will be abominable if they do, because her motives are so very noble.”

“I am sure she has a most charming advocate in you. . . . And what, then, may I ask . . . for what is noble should never be concealed . . . what can be the reason of economy so unnecessary?”

“She does not think it unnecessary, Major Allen; for she has an orphan niece who is left quite dependent upon her, and what she is saving will be for her.”

Amiable indeed! . . . Then her property is only income, presume? Really that is a pity, considering how remarkably well such a disposition would employ the capital.”

"Oh: no, that is not so neither; my uncle Barnaby let everything entirely at her own disposal; only she thinks, . . . and here the silly and loquacious Elizabeth stopped short, for the idea suddenly occurred to her that it was not right to talk so much of her aunt's concerns to so slight an acquaintance as Major Allen; and not exactly knowing how to end her sentence, she permitted a sudden thought to strike her, and exclaimed, "I wonder when they will begin dancing?"

But the major had heard enough.

He resumed the conversation, however, but very discreetly, by saying, "That young lady in mourning is her niece, I suppose? and a beautiful creature she is. . . . But how come she to be in such deep mourning, when that of her aunt is so slight?"

Had the simple Elizabeth understood the principle of vicarious mourning upon which these habiliments had been transferred from the widow to her niece, she would doubtless, from the talkative frankness of her nature, have disclosed it; but as her confidential conversation with her new relative had left her ignorant of this, she answered, with rather a confused recollection of Mrs. Barnaby's explanation, "I believe it is because she wears it out of romantic sorrow for her own papa, though he has been dead for years and years."

"Will you ask your brother, Miss Peters, to introduce me to Mrs. Barnaby?"

"Certainly, Major Allen, if you wish it. . . . James," added the young lady, stretching out her fan to draw his attention from Agnes, with whom he was talking, "James, step here. . . . Major Allen wishes you to introduce him to Mrs. Barnaby."

The major rose at the moment, and strengthened the request by adding, "Will you do me that honour, Mr. Peters?"

The young man bowed slightly, and, without answering, moved to the front of the happy widow, followed by the obsequious major, and said, "Major Allen wishes to be introduced to you, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . Major Allen, Mrs. Barnaby."

It was not without an effort that this consummation of her dearest hopes was received with some tolerable appearance of external composure by the lady; but she felt that the moment

was an important one, and called up all her energy to support her under it. Perhaps she blushed, but that, for obvious reasons, was not perceptible; but she cast down her eyes upon her fan, and then raised them again to the face of the bending major with a look that really said a great deal.

The established questions and answers in use on such occasions were going on with great zeal and animation on both sides, when a fresh source of gratification presented itself to the widow in the approach of Mr. Frederick Stephenson to Agnes, in a manner as flatteringly decided as that of the major to herself; but, being quite a stranger to the Peters family, he was preceded by the master of the ceremonies, who whispered his name and family to Mrs. Peters, asking her permission to present him to the young lady in mourning, who appeared to be of her party.

This was of course readily accorded; when the introduction took place, and was followed by a petition from the young man for the honour of dancing with her.

Agnes looked a vast deal more beautiful than he had ever dared to believe possible through her veil, as she answered, "I am engaged."

"Then the next?" said Mr. Stephenson eagerly.

Agnes bowed her blushing assent, and the young man continued to stand before her, going through pretty nearly the same process as the major.

This lasted till the quadrilles began to form, when James Peters claimed her hand for the dance.

Two of the Miss Peters soon followed, when Major Allen said, "As the young ladies are forsaking you, madam, may you not be induced to make a party at whist?"

"I should have no objection whatever, major," replied Mrs. Barnaby, "provided there was room at a table where they did not play high."

"Of course, if I have the honour of making a table for you, my dear madam, the stakes will be of your own naming. . . . Will you permit me to go and see what can be done?"

"You are excessively kind. . . . I shall be greatly obliged."

The active Mars departed instantly, with a step, if not as light, at least as zealous in its speed, as that of Mercury when bent upon one of his most roguish errands, and in a wonderfully short space of time he returned with the intelligence that

a table was waiting for her. He then presented his arm, which she took with condescending dignity, and led her off.

" Ah ! sure a pair was never seen,
So justly formed to meet by nature ! "

exclaimed Mrs. Peters to Lucy, as they walked away ; and greatly relieved, she rose, and taking her daughter by the arm, joined a party of her friends in a more busy part of the room.

Meanwhile the quadrilles proceeded, and Agnes, notwithstanding the heart-beating shyness inevitably attending a first appearance, did not lose her look of sweet composure or her graceful ease. James Peters was an attentive and encouraging partner, and she would probably soon have forgotten that this was the first time she had ever danced, except at school, had she not, when the dance was about half over, perceived herself to be an object of more attention to one of the standers-by than any girl, so very new, can be conscious of, without embarrassment. The eyes which thus annoyed her were those of Colonel Hubert. His remarkable height made him conspicuous among the throng, which was rendered more dense than usual by a wish, every moment increasing, to look at the " beautiful girl in deep mourning ; " and perhaps her happening to know who he was made her fancy that it was more embarrassing to be looked at by him than by any one else. The annoyance, however, did not last long, for he disappeared.

Colonel Hubert left the place where he had stood, and the study in which he had certainly found some interest, for the purpose of looking for his friend Stephenson. He found him in the doorway.

" Frederick, I want you," said the colonel. " Come with me, my good fellow, and I will prove to you that, notwithstanding my age and infirmities, I still retain my faculties sufficiently to find out what is truly and really lovely as ably as yourself. Come on, suffer yourself to be led, and I will show you what I call a beautiful girl."

Stephenson quietly suffered himself to be led captive, and half a dozen paces placed him immediately opposite to Agnes Willoughby.

" Look at that girl," said Colonel Hubert in a whisper, " and tell me what you think of her ? "

" The angel in black ? "

"Yes, Frederick."

"This is glorious, by Heaven! . . . Why, Hubert, it is my own black angel!"

"You do not mean to tell me that the girl we saw with that horribly vulgar woman, and this epitome of aethelgance, are the same?"

"But, upon my soul, I do, sir. . . . And now what do you say to the advantage of being able to see through a thick veil?"

"I cannot believe it, Stephenson," replied Colonel Hubert, again fixing his eyes in an earnest gaze upon Agnes.

"Then die in your unbelief, and much good may it do you. Why, I have been introduced to her, man her name is Willoughby, and I am to dance the next quadrille with her."

"If this be so, peccavi!" said the colonel, turning abruptly away.

"I think so," replied his friend, following, and relinquishing even the pleasure of looking at Agnes for that of enjoying his triumph over Hubert. "Won't this make a good story? And don't you think, colonel, that for a few years longer, at least, it may be as well to postpone the adoption of your lady aunt's system, and when you see two females together, look at both, to ascertain whether one of them may not be the loveliest creature in the universe, before you give up your whole soul to the amiable occupation of quizzing the other?"

"You think this is a very good jest, Frederick but to me, I assure you, it seems very much the contrary."

"Because it is so melancholy for a man of five-and-thirty to lose his eye-sight?"

"Because, Stephenson, it is so melancholy to know that such a being as that fair girl is in the hands of a woman whose appearance speaks her to be so utterly vulgar, to say the very least of it."

"Take care, my venerable philosopher, that you do not blunder about the old lady as egregiously as you before did about the young one. When I got the master of the ceremonies to perform for me the precious service of an introduction, I inquired about the party that she and the furbelow aunt were with, and learned that they were among the most respectable resident inhabitants of Clifton."

"I am heartily glad of it, Frederick and yet, if their party consisted of the noblest in the land, I should still feel this

aunt to be a greater spot upon her beauty than any wart or mole that ever disfigured a fair cheek at least, it would, I think, be quite sufficient to keep my heart safe, if I thought this uncommon-looking creature still more beautiful than I do which, I confess, would not be easy."

"I wish your heart joy of its security," returned Stephenson. "And now be off, and leave me to my happiness; for see, the set breaks up, and I may follow her to her place, and again present myself. . . . Come, tell me honestly, do you not envy me?"

"I never dance, you know."

"So much the worse for you, *mon cher*," and the gay young man turned off, to follow the way that he saw Agnes lead. This was to the quarter where she had left her aunt and Mrs. Peters, but they found neither.

"Don't be frightened," said her good-natured partner; "we shall find my mother in a moment." And when they did find her, she received Agnes with a smiling welcome, which contrasted pretty strongly with the stately and almost forbidding aspect with which she ever regarded Mrs. Barnaby.

Young Stephenson saw this reception, and saw also the *empressment* with which the pretty, elegant Mary Peters seemed to cling to her. More than ever persuaded that he was right, and his friend wrong, he suddenly determined on a measure that he thought might ensure a more permanent acquaintance than merely being a partner of a dance; and before presenting himself to claim her hand, he again addressed the master of the ceremonies with a request that he would present him to Mrs. Peters.

That obliging functionary made not the least objection; indeed he knew that there was not a lady in the room, either young or old, who would not thank him for an introduction to Sir Edward Stephenson's handsome brother, himself a cornet in the Blues, and the inheritor of his mother's noble estate in Worcestershire, which made him considerably a richer man than his elder brother. All this was known to everybody, for the beautiful Miss Hubert and her lover Sir Edward had been for a week or two the lions of Clifton; and though they had mixed very little in its society, there was nobody who could be considered as anybody, who would

not have been well pleased at making the acquaintance of Frederick Stephenson. The young man, too, knew well how to make the most of the ten minutes that preceded the second dance; and Mrs. Peters smiled to think, as she watched him leading Agnes to join the set, how justly her keeping faith had been rewarded by this introduction of the most *désiré* partner in the room.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Mrs. Barnaby was led to the card-room by Major Allen; but he led her slowly, and more than once found himself obliged to stop for a minute or two, that she might not be incommoded by pressing too quickly through the crowd. And thus it was they talked, as they gently won their way.

“And what may be the stake Mrs. Barnaby permits herself?” said the major, bending forward to look into the widow’s eyes.

“Very low, I assure you, major!” replied the lady, with a wave of the head that sent her plumes to brush the hirsute magnificence of his face.

“Shorts and crown points, perhaps,” rejoined the major, agreeably refreshed by the delicate fanning he had received.

“Oh fie! major . . . how can you suspect me of such extravagance? . . . No, believe me, I know too well how to use the blessings of wealth, to abuse them by playing so high as that . . . but I believe gentlemen think that nothing?”

“Why no, my dear madam, I cannot say that men . . . that is, men of a certain fashion and fortune, think much of crown points. . . For my own part, I detest gambling, though I love whist, and never care how low I play . . . though occasionally, when I get into a certain set, I am obliged to give way a little . . . but I never exceed five pound points, and twenty on the rubber; and that you know, unless the cards run extravagantly high, cannot amount to anything very alarming . . . especially as I play tolerably well, and, in fact, never play so high if I can help it. . . .”

“But, major,” said the lady, stopping short in their progress, “I really am afraid that I must decline playing at your table . . . the amount of what I could lose might not *perhaps* be a great object to me, any more than to you”

he commanded a full view of that at which Mrs. Barnaby was engaged. His recent examination of her niece gave him a feeling of interest in this aunt, that nearly superseded the amusement he might otherwise have derived from her appearance and manner. That both were likely to be affected by the intense interest and pleasure she took in her occupation, as well as in the partner who shared it with her, may be easily conceived, when it is stated that not even the entrance of the magnificent Colonel was perceived by her.

Her vivacity, her enjoyment, became more striking every moment; her words were full of piquant and agreeable meaning, which her eyes scrupled not to second; while the major assumed more and more the air and manner of a man enchanted and entranced beyond the power of concealment. But it was not the spirit of quizzing that sat upon Colonel Hubert's brow as he contemplated this scene; on the contrary, his fine countenance spoke first disgust, and then a degree of melancholy that might have seemed ill-befitting the occasion, and in a few minutes he walked away and re-entered the ball-room.

Whether intentionally or not may be doubted; but he soon again found himself opposite to the place which Agnes occupied in the quadrille, and being there, watched her with a degree of attention that seemed equally made up of curiosity and admiration. "It is strange," thought he, "that the most repulsive and the most attractive women I ever remember to have seen, should be so closely linked together."

In a few minutes the quadrille ended, when Mr. Stephenson, who had danced it with the eldest Miss Peters, said to his friend as he passed him, "We are now going to tea, and if you will come with us I will introduce you."

Colonel Hubert followed almost mechanically, yet not without a feeling somewhat allied to self-reproach at permitting himself to join the party of a Mrs. Barnaby.

This obnoxious individual was, however, nearly or rather wholly forgotten within a very few minutes after the introduction took place. Mrs. Peters's manners were, as we know, particularly lady-like and pleasing, her daughters all pretty-looking, and one of them, at least, singularly animated and agreeable; her son and the other gentleman of her party perfectly *comme il faut*; and Agnes . . . what was Agnes in the

had a right to expect. Unfortunately this wish had been too evident: and the idea of being disposed of in marriage by his brother and sisters had become a bugbear from which the young man shrank with equal indignation and contempt. The marriage of his elder brother with Miss Hubert had naturally led to great intimacy between the families; and of all the acquaintance he had ever made, Colonel Hubert was the one for whom Frederick Stephenson felt the warmest admiration and esteem; and certainly he was more proud of the affectionate partiality that distinguished individual had shown him than of any other advantage he possessed. Sir Edward Stephenson observed this, and had told his betrothed Emma that he drew the best possible augury from it for his brother's safety. "He is so proud of Montague's friendship," said he, "that it must be a most outrageous love-fit which would make him hazard it by forming a connection unworthy in any way. So jealously does he deprecate the interference of his own family on this subject, that I have long determined never more to let him see how near it is to my heart . . . and I will not even mention the subject to your brother, lest, *par impossible*, he might ever discover that I had done so; but I wish you, love, would say a word to him before we leave Clifton. . . . Tell him that Frederick has still a great propensity to fall in love at first sight, and that we shall all bless him everlastingly, if he will prescribe change of air whenever he may happen to see the fit seize him."

The fair Emma promised and kept her word; and such was the theme on which their discourse turned the night before the wedding, when, Sir Edward being engaged with the lawyer, who had just arrived from London with the settlements, the brother and sister took that stroll upon the pavement of Sion Row, which had first exhibited the stately figure of Colonel Hubert to Mrs. Barnaby's admiration. Little did Agnes think, when her head was made to obtrude itself through the window upon that occasion, that her ears caught some words of a conversation destined to prove so important to her future happiness.

That the "falling in love at first sight" had already taken place, Colonel Hubert could not doubt, as he watched his *enthusiastic friend's* look and manner, while conversing with

Agnes, and gravely and sorrowfully did he ponder on the words of his sister in their last *tête-à-tête*.

"Save him, dearest Montague, if you can," said she, "from any folly of this sort; for I really think Sir Edward would never be happy again if Frederick formed any disgraceful marriage."

"And a disgraceful marriage it would and must be," thought he; "neither her surpassing beauty . . . , nor her modest elegance either, can make it otherwise."

As if sent by fate to confirm him in this conviction, the widow at this moment approached the party, leaning on the arm of the major. Having finished her fifth rubber, and pocketed her sixteen half-crowns, Major Allen's two friends pleaded an engagement elsewhere, and Mrs. Barnaby accepted his offered escort to the tea-table.

A look of happiness is very becoming to many faces, it will often indeed lend a charm to features that in sorrow can boast of none; but there are others on which this genial and expansive emotion produces a different effect, and Mrs. Barnaby was one of them. Her eyes did not only sparkle, they perfectly glared with triumph and delight. She shook her cards and her feathers with the vivacity of a Bacchantess when tossing her cymbals in the air; and her joyous laugh and her conscious whisper, as each in turn attracted attention from all around, were exactly calculated to produce just such an effect as the luckless Agnes would have lived in silence and solitude for ever to avoid witnessing.

The *habile* major desisted the party the instant he entered the room, and led the lady directly to it. But the table was fully occupied, and for a moment no one stirred but Agnes, who, pale and positively trembling with distress, stood up, though without saying a word.

Mrs. Peters coloured, and for a second looked doubtful what to do; but when she saw Major Allen address himself with the manner of an old acquaintance to Elizabeth, she rose, and slightly saying, "I am sorry you are too late for tea, Mrs. Barnaby," moved off, followed, of course, by her daughters, and the gentlemen attending on them.

"I dare say we shall find a cup that will do . . . never mind us . . . Agnes, don't you go, but try that pot, will you, at the bottom of the table; this is as dry as hay."

The major was immediately on the alert, and seizing on the tea-pot seized the hand of Agnes with it. Neck, cheeks, and brow were crimson in an instant; and as she withdrew her hand from his audacious touch, her eye caught that of Colonel Hubert fixed upon her. Shame, vexation, and something almost approaching to terror, brought tears into that beautiful eye; and for a moment the gallant soldier forgot everything in an ardent longing to seize by the collar and fling from the chamber the man who had thus dared to offend her. But Frederick Stephenson, who also saw the action, quitted the side of his partner, contrary to all the laws of etiquette, and quickly placing himself beside Agnes, bestowed such a glance on the major as immediately turned the attention of that judicious personage to the tea-pot and Mrs. Barnaby.

"You dance with me now, Miss Willoughby," said young Stephenson, which, as he had enjoyed that honour twice before, he had been too discreet to hint at till the arrival of the widow and the major had rendered her being immediately occupied so particularly desirable. Agnes perfectly understood his motive, and though her cheeks again tingled as she remembered how impossible it was for her to run effectually from the annoyance that so cruelly beset her, she felt touched and grateful for his kindness; and the smile with which she accepted it, would have sufficed to subdue the heart of Frederick had an atom of it been unsubdued before.

CHAPTER III.

MELANCHOLY MEDITATIONS. — AN EVENTFUL WALK. — A PLEASANT BREAKFAST. — A COMFORTABLE CONVERSATION IN A CLOSET.

THE slumbers of Agnes that night were not heavy, for she waked while the birds were still singing their morning hymn to the sun, which poured its beams full upon her face through her uncurtained window. She turned restlessly upon her little bed, and tried to sleep again; but it would not do; and as she listened to the twittering without, so strong a desire seized her to leave the narrow boundary of her little closet, and breathe the air of heaven, that after the hesitation and struggle of a few moments she yielded, and noiselessly creeping out of bed, and

performing the business of her toilet with the greatest caution, ventured to open the door communicating with her aun's chamber, when she had the great satisfaction of hearing her snore loud enough to mask any sound she might herself make in passing through the room.

In like manner she successfully made her way down stairs and out of the house, and her heart beat with something like pleasure as she felt the sweet morning breeze blow from the downs upon her cheek. She walked towards the beautiful point on which the windmill stands; but alas! she was no longer happy enough to feel that the landscape it commanded could confer that sort of perfect felicity which she had before thought belonged to it. She sat down again on the same spot where Mary, Lucy, James, and herself had sat before, but with how different a feeling! and yet it wanted one whole day of a week since that time. What new sorrow was it that weighed thus upon her spirits? . . . The good-humoured liking that her new acquaintance then testified towards her, had since ripened into friendship . . . at the ball of the preceding evening she had, in fashionable phrase, met with the most brilliant success . . . she had danced every dance, and three of them with the partner that every lady in the room would best have liked to dance with; and yet there was a feeling of depression at her heart greater than she had ever been conscious of before. How was this? . . . Could Agnes herself tell the cause of it? . . . Yes, if she had asked herself, she could have answered, and have answered truly, that it was because she now knew that the better, the more estimable, the more amiable the society around her might be, the more earnestly she ought to endeavour to withdraw from it. . . . This conviction was enough to make her feel sad, and there was no need to seek farther in order to discover other sources of sadness, if any such there were, within her bosom.

And thus she sat, again pulling thyme from the hill-side; but it was no longer so sweet as before, and she threw it from her, like a child who has broken its toy, and just reached the sage conviction that its gaudy colouring was good for nothing. While indulging in this most unsatisfactory fit of musing, the sound of a horse's feet almost close behind startled her; but instead of turning her head to see whom it might be, she *started up, and walked onward.* The horseman, however, was

perhaps more curious than herself, for he immediately rode past her, nor scrupled to turn his head as he did so, to ascertain who the early wanderer might be.

But even before he had done so Agnes knew, by a moment's glance at his figure as he passed her, that it was Colonel Hubert.

He checked his horse, and touched his hat, and for half an instant Agnes thought he was going to speak to her : perhaps he thought so too ; but if he did, he changed his mind, for looking about in the distance, as if reconnoitring his position, he pressed the sides of his horse and galloped on, a groom presently following.

Agnes breathed more freely. "Thank God, he did not speak to me !" she exclaimed. "If he had, I should have wanted power to answer him. . . . Never, no, never can I forget . . . were I to see him every day to the end of my life, I should never forget the expression of his face as my aunt Barnaby . . . and that dreadful man . . . walked up the room towards the tea-table ! . . . no, nor the glance he gave, so full of vexation and regret, when his kind-hearted, sweet-tempered friend, asked me again to dance with him ! . . . Proud, disdainful man ! I hope and trust that I never may behold him more ! . . . It is he who first taught me to know and feel how miserable is the future that awaits me !" This soliloquy, partly muttered and partly thought, was here interrupted by her once more hearing the sound of a horse's feet on the turf close behind her.

"He has turned back !" thought she, "though I did not see him pass me. Oh ! if he speaks to me, how shall I answer him !"

But again the horseman rode past, and another rapid glance showed her that this time it was not Colonel Hubert, nor did she trouble herself to think whom else it might be ; and if she had, the labour would have been thrown away, for in this case, as before, the rider looked back, and displayed to her view the features of Major Allen.

He instantly stopped his horse, and jumped to the ground, then skilfully wheeling the animal round, placed himself between it and the terrified Agnes, and began walking beside her.

Her first impulse was to stand still, and ask him wherefore

he thus approached her; but when she turned towards him to speak, the expression of his broad audacious countenance struck her with dismay, and she suddenly turned round, and walked rapidly and in silence back towards the windmill, and the buildings beyond it.

"Are you afraid of me, my charming young lady?" said the major with a chuckle, again wheeling his charger so as to place himself beside Agnes. . . . "No reason, upon my soul. . . . How is your adorable aunt? . . . Tell her I inquire! for her, and tell her, too, upon the honour of an officer and a gentleman; that I consider her as by far the finest woman I ever saw. . . . But why do you run on so swiftly, my pretty little fawn? Your charming aunt will thank me, I am sure, for not letting you put yourself in a fever;" and so saying his huge hand grasped the elbow of Agnes, and he held her forcibly back.

A feeling of terror, greater than the occasion called for perhaps, induced Agnes to utter a cry at again feeling this hateful gripe, which seemed as if by magic to bring her relief, for at the same moment Colonel Hubert was on the other side of her. Agnes looked up in his face with an undisguised expression of delight, and on his offering his arm she took it instantly, but without either of them having uttered a word.

There was something in the arrangement of the trio that Major Allen did not appear to approve, for having taken about three steps in advance, he suddenly stopped, and saying in a sort of blustering mutter, "You will be pleased to give my best compliments to your aunt," he sprang upon his horse so heedlessly as to render it probable both lady and gentleman might get a kick from the animal, and making it bound forward darted off across the down.

Agnes gently withdrew her arm, and said, but in a voice not over steady, "Indeed, sir, I am very much obliged to you!"

"I am glad to have been near you, Miss Willoughby, when that very insolent person addressed you," said Colonel Hubert, but without making any second offer of his arm. And a moment after he added, "Excuse me for telling you that you are imprudent in walking thus early and alone. Though Clifton on this side appears a rural sort of residence, it is not without some of the disagreeable features of a watering-place."

"I have lived always in the country: . . . I had no idea there was any danger," . . . said Agnes, shocked to think how much her own childish impudence must have strengthened Colonel Hubert's worst opinion of her and her connections.

"Nor is there, perhaps, any actual danger," replied the colonel; "but there are many things that may not exactly warrant that name, which nevertheless . . ."

"Would be very improper for me! . . . Oh! it was great ignorance — great folly!" interrupted Agnes eagerly; "and never, never again will I put myself in need of such kindness!"

"Has your aunt always lived with you in the country?" was a question which Colonel Hubert felt greatly disposed to ask; but, instead of it, he said, turning down from the windmill hill, "You reside at Rodney Place, I believe, and; if I mistake not, this is the way."

"No, sir . . . we lodge in Lion Row. . . . It is here close by. . . . Do not let me delay your ride any more . . . I am very much obliged to you;" . . . and without waiting for an answer, Agnes stepped rapidly down the steep side of the hill, and was half-way towards Lion Row before the colonel felt quite sure of what he had intended to say in return.

"But it is no matter. . . . She is gone," thought he, and talking his reins from the hand of his groom, he remounted; and resumed his morning ride.

* * * * *

Mrs. Barnaby had not quitted her bed when Agnes returned; but she was awake, and hearing some one enter the drawing-room, called out, "Who's there?"

"It is I, aunt," said Agnes, opening the door with flushed cheeks and out of breath, partly, perhaps, from the agitation occasioned by her adventure, and partly from the speed with which she had walked from the windmill home.

"And where on earth have you been already, child? Mercy on me, what a colour you have got! . . . This ball has done you good as well as me, I think. There, get in and take your things off, and then come back and talk to me while I dress myself."

Agnes went into her little room and shut the door. She really was very much afraid of her aunt; and in general obeyed her commands with the prompt obedience of a child who fears

to be scolded if he make a moment's delay. But at this moment, a feeling stronger than fear kept her within the blessed sanctuary of her solitary closet. She seemed gasping for want of air . . . her aunt's room felt close after coming from the fresh breeze of the hill, and it was, therefore, as Agnes thought, that the sitting down alone beside her own open window seemed a luxury for which it was worth while to risk the sharpest reprimand that ever aunt gave . . . But why, while she enjoyed it, did big tears chase each other down her cheeks ?

Whatever the cause, the effect was salutary. She became composed, she recovered her breath, and her complexion faded to its usual delicate tint, or perhaps to a shade paler ; and then she began to think that it was not wise to do anything for which she knew she should be reproached . . . if she could help it . . . and now she could help it ; so she smoothed her chestnut tresses, bathed her eyes in water, and giving one deep sigh at leaving her own side of the door for that which belonged to her aunt, she came forth determined to bear very patiently whatever might be said to her. Fortunately for Agnes, Mrs. Barnaby had just approached that critical moment of her toilet business, when it was her especial will and pleasure to be alone ; so, merely saying in a snappish accent, " What in the world have you been about so long ? " she added, " Now get along into the drawing-room, and take care that the toast and my muffin are ready for me, and kept hot before the fire ; — it's almost too hot for fire, but I must have my breakfast warm and comfortable, and we can let it out afterwards."

Agnes most joyfully obeyed. It was a great relief, and she was meekly thankful for it ; but she very nearly forgot the muffins and the toast, for the windows of the room were open, and looked out upon the windmill and the down, a view so pleasant that it was several minutes before she recollected the duties she had to perform. At last, however, she did recollect them, and made such good use of the time that remained, that when her aunt entered, bright in carmine and lilac ribands, every thing was as it should be ; and she had only to sit and listen to her ecstatic encomiums on the ball, warm each *successive piece of muffin* at the end of a fork, and answer *properly to the ten times repeated question*, —

"Hav'n't you got a good aunt, Agnes, to take you to such a ball as that?"

At length, however, the tedious meal was ended, and Mrs. Barnaby busied herself considerably more than usual in setting the little apartment in order. She made Jerningham carefully brush away the crumbs—a ceremony sometimes neglected—set out her own best pink-lined work-box in state, placed the table agreeably at one of the windows, with two or three chairs round it, and then told Agnes, that if she had any of her lesson-book work to do, she might sit in her own room, for she did not want her.

Gladly was the mandate obeyed, and willingly did she aid Betty Jacks in putting her tiny premises in order, for she was not without hope that her friend Mary would pay her a visit there to talk over the events of the evening; an occupation for which, to say the truth, she felt considerably more inclined than for any "lesson-book work" whatever.

Nor was she disappointed . . . hardly did she feel ready to receive her, before her friend arrived.

"And well, Carina, how fares it with you to-day? Do you not feel almost too big for your little room after all the triumphs of last night?" was the gay address of Miss Peters as she seated herself upon one of Agnes's boxes. But it was not answered in the same tone; nay, there was much of reproof as well as sadness in the accent with which Agnes uttered, —

"Triumphs! . . . Oh! Mary, what a word!"

"You are the only one, I believe, who would quarrel with it. Did ever a little country girl under seventeen make a more successful *début*?"

"Did ever country girl of any age have more reason to feel that she never ought to make any *début* at all?"

"My poor Agnes!" . . . said Miss Peters more gravely, "it will not do for you to feel so deeply the follies that may, and, I fear, ever will be committed by *your* aunt and *my* aunt Barnaby. . . . It is a sad, vexing business, beyond all doubt, that you should have to go into company with a woman determined to make herself so outrageously absurd; but it is not fair to remember that, and nothing else . . . you should at least recollect also that the most distinguished man in the room paid you the compliment of joining your party at tea."

"Paid me the compliment! . . . Oh! Mary."

"And oh! Agnes, can you pretend to doubt that it was in compliment to you? . . . And in compliment to whom was it that he danced with you?"

"He never danced with me, Mary," said Agnes, colouring.

"My dear child, what are you talking about? Why, he danced with you three times."

"Oh yes. . . . Mr. Stephenson. . . . he is indeed the kindest, most obliging. . . ."

"And the handsomest partner that you ever danced with. . . . Is it not so!"

"That may easily be, Mary, if by partner you mean a gentleman partner, for I never danced with any till last night; and it is only saying that he is handsomer than your brother and Mr. Osborne, and I think he is."

"And I think so too, therefore on that point we shall not quarrel. But tell me, how did you like the ball altogether? . . . Did it please you? . . . Were you amused? . . . Shall you be longing to go to another?"

"Let me answer your last question first. . . . I hope never, never, never again to go to a ball with my aunt Barnaby. . . . But had it not been for the pain, the shame, the agony she caused me, I should have liked it very much indeed. . . . particularly the tea-time, Mary. . . . How pleasant it was before she came with that horrid, horrid man! Shall you ever forget the sight as they came up the room towards us? . . . Oh! how he looked at her!"

Agnes shuddered, and pressed her hands to her eyes, as if to shut out an object that she still saw.

"It was tremendous," replied her friend: "but don't worry yourself by thinking Mr. Stephenson looked at her just then, for he really did not. You know he was sitting at the corner of the table by me, and his back was turned to her, thank Heaven! . . . But I will tell you who did look at her, if Stephenson did not. . . . that magnificent-looking colonel stared as if he had seen an apparition; but I did not mind that half so much, nor you either, I suppose. . . . An old soldier like him must be used to such a variety of quizzes, that nobody, I imagine, can appear so preposterous to him as they might do to his young friend. . . . By the by, I think he is a very fine-looking man for his age; don't you?"

"Who?" said Agnes innocently. — "Why, Colonel Ha-

bert. . . . His sister, who is just married to Sir Edward Stephenson, is nearly twenty years younger than he is, they say."

"Twenty years?" said Agnes. — "Yes. . . . Must it not be strange to see them together as brother and sister? he must seem so much more like her father."

"Her father!" said Agnes. — "Yes, I should think so. But you do not talk half as much about the ball as I expected, Agnes: I think you were disappointed, and yet I do not know how that could be. You dance beautifully, and seem very fond of it; you had the best partners in the room, danced every dance, and were declared on all sides to be the *belle par excellence*, and yet you do not seem to have enjoyed it."

"Oh! I did enjoy it all the time that she was out of the room playing cards; I enjoyed it very, *very* much indeed. . . . so much that I am surprised at myself to feel how soon all my painful shyness was forgotten. . . . But after all, Mary, though you call her *your* aunt Barnaby, as if to comfort me by sharing my sufferings, she is not really your aunt, and still less is she *your* sole protector. . . . still less is she the being on whom you depend for your daily bread. Alas! my dear Mary, is there not more cause for surprise in my having enjoyed the ball so much, than in my not having enjoyed it more?"

"My poor Agnes, this is sad indeed," said Mary, all her gaiety vanishing at once, "for it is true. Do not think me indifferent to your most just sorrow. . . . Would to Heaven I could do any thing effectually to alleviate it! But while you are here, at least, endeavour to think more of us, and less of her. Wherever you are known, you will be respected for your own sake; and that is worth all other respect, depend upon it. When you leave us, indeed, I shall be very anxious for you. Tell me, dear Agnes, something more about your aunt Compton. Is it quite impossible that you should be placed under her protection?"

"Oh yes! She would not hear of it. She paid for my education, and all my other expenses, during five years; and my aunt Barnaby says, that when she undertook to do this, she expressly said that it was all she could ever do for me. They say that she has ruined her little fortune by lavish and indiscriminate charity to the poor, and aunt Barnaby says that she

believes that she has hardly enough left to keep herself alive. But I sometimes think, Mary, that I could be very happy if she would let me work for her, and help her, and perhaps give lessons in Silverton. . . . I know some things already well enough, perhaps, to teach in such a remote place as that, when better masters cannot be procured; and I should be so happy in doing this . . . if aunt Compton would but let me live with her."

"Then why do you not tell her so, Agnes?"

"Because the last—the only time I have seen her for years, though she kissed and embraced me for a moment, she pushed me from her afterwards, and said I was only more artful than aunt Barnaby, and that I should never be either graced or disgraced by her. . . . those were her words, I shall never forget them . . . and she has the reputation of being immoveably obstinate in her resolves."

"That does not look very promising, I must confess. But wisdom tells us that the possibility of future sorrow should never prevent our enjoying present happiness. Now, I do think, dear Agnes, that just now you may enjoy yourself, if you like us as well as we like you, . . . for we are all determined to endure aunt Barnaby for your sake, and in return you must resolve to be happy in spite of her for ours. And now adieu! . . . I want to have some talk with mamma this morning: but I dare say you will hear from me, or see me again, before the end of the day. Farewell!" . . . And Miss Peters made a quiet exit from the closet and from the house; for she had heard voices in the drawing-room as she came up the stairs, and now heard voices in the drawing-room as she went down; and having business in her head upon which she was exceedingly intent, she was anxious to avoid being seen or heard by Mrs. Barnaby, lest she should be detained.

CHAPTER IV.

A TÊTE-À-TÊTE IN A DRAWING-ROOM. — AUTOBIOGRAPHY — A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY CONCERNING THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

THE voices which alarmed Miss Peters were those of Mrs. Barnaby and Major Allen. The acquaintance between them had gone quite far enough on the preceding evening to justify the gentleman's *aimable empressement* to inquire for the lady's health; besides, he was somewhat curious to know if the pretty, skittish young creature he had encountered in his morning's ride had recounted the adventure to her aunt. It was his private opinion that she had not; and if so, he should know what to think of the sudden appearance and protecting demeanour of her tall friend. It was thus he reasoned as he walked towards Sion Row as soon as he had finished his breakfast; and yet, though he had lost so little time, he did not arrive till at least three minutes after the widow had begun to expect him.

"I need not ask my charming Mrs. Barnaby how she rested after her ball . . . eyes do not sparkle thus, unless they have been blessed with sleep; . . ." and the lady's hand was taken, bowed upon, and the tips of her fingers kissed, before she had quite recovered the soft embarrassment his entrance had occasioned.

"You are very kind to call upon me, Major Allen. . . . Do sit down. . . . I live as yet comparatively in great retirement; for during Mr. Barnaby's lifetime we saw an immense deal of company, — that old-fashioned sort of country visiting, you know, that never leaves one's house empty. . . . I could not stand it when I was left alone . . . and that was the reason I left my beautiful place."

"Silverton or Silverton Park, was it not? . . . I think I have heard of it."

"Yes, Silverton. . . . And do you know, major, that the remembrance of all that racket and gaiety was so oppressive to my nerves during the first months of my widowhood, that I threw off every thing that reminded me of it . . . sold my carriages and horses, let my place, turned off all my servants;

and positively, when I set off for this place in order to see my sister Peters and her family, I knew not if I should ever have strength or spirits to enter into general society again."

"Thank God, dearest madam, that you have made the effort! . . . Though the hardened and war-worn nature of man cannot melt with all the softness of yours, there is yet within us a chord that may be made to vibrate in sympathy when words of true feeling reach it! How well I understood your feelings . . . and how difficult it is not to envy, even in death, the being who has left such a remembrance behind! . . . But we must not dwell on this. . . Tell me, dear Mrs. Barnaby, tell,—as to a friend who understands and appreciates you,—do you regret the having left your elegant retirement? . . . or do you feel, as I trust you do, that Providence has not gifted you so singularly for nothing? . . . do you feel that your fellow-creatures have a claim upon you, and that it ought not to be in secret and in solitude that the hours of such a being should be spent? Tell me, do you feel this?"

"Alas! Major Allen, there is so much weakness in the heart of a woman, that she is hardly sure for many days together how she ought to feel. . . We are all impulse, all soul, all sentiment, . . . and our destiny must ever depend upon the friends we meet in our passage through this thorny world!"

"Beautiful idea! . . . Where is the poet that has more sweetly painted the female heart? . . . And what a study it offers when such a heart is thrown open to one! Good God! to see a creature so formed for enjoyment,—so beaming with innocent cheerfulness,—so rich in the power of conferring happiness wherever she deigns to smile, . . . to see such a being turn weeping and alone from her hospitable halls, and from all the pomp and splendour that others cling to . . . what a spectacle! Have you no lingering regret, dearest lady, for having left your charming mansion?"

"Perhaps there are moments . . . or rather, I should say, perhaps there have been moments, when something of the kind has crossed me. But if I had not disposed of my place, I should never have seen Clifton. . . My spirits wanted the change, and I feel already better in this delightful air. *See*

I confess I do regret having sold my beautiful greys . . . I shall never meet any I like so well again."

"A set, were they?" — "Oh yes."

"Four greys . . . and all well matched?" — "Perfectly. . . . Poor Mr. Barnaby took so much pains about it. . . . It was his delight to please me . . . I ought not to have sold them."

"It was a pity," . . . said the kind major with a sigh.

"Don't talk about it, Major Allen!" . . . and here one of the widow's most curiously embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, delightfully scented with musk, was lightly and carefully applied to her eyes.

"Nay," said the major, venturing gently to withdraw it, "you must not yield to this dangerous softness. . . . I cannot bear to have those eyes concealed! . . . it produces the chilling sensation of an eclipse at noon-day. . . . I shall run away from you if you will not look at me."

"No, do not," . . . said the widow, making an effort to smile, which was rewarded by a look of gratitude; and a seemingly involuntary kiss bestowed upon the hand that had withdrawn the envious handkerchief.

"And that pretty little girl, your niece, Mrs. Barnaby," . . . said the major, as if considerably changing the conversation; "how is she this morning?"

"Oh! quite well, poor child, and in my dressing-room, going over her Italian and French lessons before she does them with me."

"Good Heaven! . . . Is it possible that you devote yourself thus? . . . Take care, charming Mrs. Barnaby . . . take care that you do not permit your affectionate nature to form an attachment to that young person which may destroy all your future prospects in life! . . . At your age, and with your exquisite beauty, you ought to be looking forward to the renewal of the tender tie that has already made your happiness! . . . And who is there . . . pardon me if I speak boldly . . . who is there who would venture to give his whole heart, his soul, his entire existence to one who has no heart to give in return? Think you, Mrs. Barnaby, that it can be in the power of any niece in the world to atone to a woman of your exquisite sensibility for the loss of that ardent affection which

can only exist between a husband and wife? Tell me, do you believe this?"

"It is a question," replied the widow, casting her eyes upon the ground, "that I have never asked myself."

"Then neglect it no longer. . . . For God's sake — for the sake of your future happiness, which must be so inexpressibly dear to all who know you all who appreciate you justly for the sake of the young girl herself, do not involve yourself by undertaking the duties of a mother towards one who from her age could never have stood to you in the relation of a child."

"Alas! no," said Mrs. Barnaby; "I lost my only babe a few weeks before its father. . . . Had it lived, it would this spring have been three years old! You say true the age of Agnes must ever prevent my feeling for her as a child of my own. . . . My poor sister was indeed so much older than myself, that I always rather looked upon her as an aunt, or as a mother, than as my sister."

"Of course you must have done so; and, interesting and inexpressibly touching as it is to witness your beautiful tenderness towards her child, it is impossible not to feel that this tenderness carried too far will inevitably destroy the future happiness of your life. Forgive, I implore you, a frankness that can only proceed from my deep interest in your welfare. . . . Is this young person entirely dependent upon you?"

"At this moment she is; but she will be provided for at the death of her great-aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Compton of Compton Basett; . . . and to say the truth, Major Allen, as you so kindly interest yourself in what concerns me, I neither do nor ever shall consider myself bound to retain Agnes Willoughby in my family, under any circumstances that should render her being so inconvenient."

"I delight in receiving such an assurance dear, excellent Mrs. Barnaby! What a heart! what an understanding! what beauty! what unequalled sweetness! No wonder the late Mr. Barnaby delighted, as you say, to please you! 'Lives there the man,' as the immortal Byron says — 'Lives there the man with soul so dead,' as to be capable of doing otherwise? But to return to the subject of this poor little girl she might be termed pretty, perhaps, in any society but yours. .

Tell me, is this Mrs. Compton, of Compton Bassett, wealthy? Is she also a relation of yours?"

"Yes, she is immensely wealthy. . . . It is a magnificent estate. She is a maiden sister of my father's."

"Then Miss Willoughby will eventually be a great fortune. . . . How old is your aunt?"

"My aunt is near sixty, I believe, but the provision intended for Agnes is only sufficient to maintain her like a gentlewoman. The bulk of the property is settled on me and my heirs."

"I fear you will think me an unseasonable visiter," said the fully-satisfied major, rising, "and I will go now, lest you should refuse to admit me again."

"Do not go yet," said the gentle widow, playfully refusing the hand extended to take leave. "What in the world now have you got to do, that should prevent your bestowing a little more time on me?"

"It would be difficult, Mrs. Barnaby," said the major with an eloquent look, "to find any occupation sufficiently attractive to take me from you, so long as I dared flatter myself that it was your wish I should remain."

"Well, then sit down again, Major Allen for do you know, I want you to tell me all about yourself. . . . Where have you served? — what dangers have you passed through? You have no idea how much interest I should take in listening to the history of your past life."

"My sweet friend! Never should I have entered upon such a subject unbidden yet with such an auditor, how dear will the privilege become of talking of myself! But you must check me, if I push your gentle patience too far. Tell me when you are weary of me or of my little narrative."

"I will, I will depend upon it, only do not stop till I do, major."

"Adorable sweetness! Thus, then, I am to be my own biographer, and to a listener whose opinion would, in my estimation, outweigh that of all the congregated world, if placed in judgment on my actions. It is probable, my charming friend, that my name as Ensign Allen may not be *totally unknown* to you. . . . It was while I still held that *humble rank*, that I was first fortunate enough to distinguish

myself. In an affair of some importance in the Peninsula, I turned what might have been a very disastrous defeat into a most complete victory, and was immediately promoted to a company. Shortly after this I chanced to show the same sort of spirit, which was, I believe, born with me, in a transaction nowise professional, but which, nevertheless, made me favourably mentioned, and certainly contributed to bring me into the rather general notice with which Europe at present honours me. . . . Yet it was merely an affair with a party of brigands, in which I put seven fellows *hors de combat*, and thereby enabled that celebrated grandee, the Duke d'Almafonte d'Aragona d'Astrada, to escape, together with his beautiful daughter, and all their jewels. The service might have been, I own, of considerable importance to them, but the gratitude it produced in the minds of both father and daughter, greatly exceeded what was called for . . . he offered me . . . so widely separate as we now are, there can be no indelicacy in my confiding the circumstance to you, my dear Mrs. Barnaby, but . . . the fact is, he offered me his only daughter in marriage, with an immense fortune. But, alas! how capricious is the human will! . . . my hour, my dear friend, was not yet come. . . I felt, beautiful as Isabella d'Almafonte was accounted by all the world, that I could not give her my heart, and I performed the painful duty of refusing her hand. Nothing, however, could be more noble than the subsequent conduct of the duke, . . . at the first painful moment he only said . . . 'Captain Allen, we must submit' . . . of course he said it in Spanish, but it would look like affectation, in such a narrative as this, were I not to translate it . . . 'Capitano Alleno, bisogno submittajo nos,' were his words . . . I am sure I shall never forget them, for they touched me to the very heart. . . I could not speak, my feelings choked me, and I left his palace in silence. Five years had elapsed, and I had perhaps too nearly forgotten the lovely but unfortunate Isabella d'Almafonte, when I received a packet from a notary of Madrid, informing me that her illustrious father was dead, and had gratefully bequeathed me a legacy, amounting in English money to thirty thousand pounds sterling. I was by that time already in possession of the estates of my ancestors, and such a sum might have appeared a very useless bagatelle, had not an accident rendered it at that time of really important convenience."

“ Good Heaven ! how interesting ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Barnaby. “ And what, dear major, became of the unfortunate Isabella ? ”

“ She took the veil, Mrs. Barnaby, in the convent de Los Ceurores Dolentes, within a few months of her noble father’s death. . . . Before this event she had not the power of disposing of herself as she wished ; . . . but her excellent father never tortured her by the proposal of any other marriage. . . . ”

“ Admirable man ! ” cried Mrs. Barnaby, greatly touched. “ Dear Major Allen ! ” she added, in a voice that seemed to deprecate opposition, “ you must, indeed you must, do me an immense favour. When Mrs. Peters took me to Bristol in her coach the other day, I bought myself this album ; it has got nothing in it as yet but my own name ; now, if you do not wish to break my heart, you must write the name of Isabella d’Almafonte in this first page . . . it will be an autograph inexpressibly interesting ! ”

The major took the book and the pen that were offered by the two hands of Mrs. Barnaby, and said with a profound sigh, —

“ Break your heart ! . . . I should never have broken the heart of any woman, if what she asked had been seconded by such eyes as those ! ”

A silence of some moments followed, a part of which was employed by the major in writing the name of Isabella d’Almafonte, and a part in gazing on the downcast lids of the admired eyes opposite to him ; but this too trying interval ended at length by the lady’s recovering herself enough to say, “ And that accident, Major Allen, that made the duke’s little legacy convenient to you ? . . . what was it ? . . . Do not have any reserve with one whom you have honoured by the name of friend ! ”

“ Reserve to you ! . . . never ! . . . While you continue to admit me to your presence, all reserve on my part must be impossible. The accident was this, my friend ; and I am not sorry to name it, as it gives me an opportunity of alluding to a subject that I would rather you heard mentioned by me than by any other. After the battle of Waterloo — (concerning which, by the by, I should like to tell you an anecdote,) — after the battle of Waterloo, I became in common with nearly all the officers of the army, an idle man ; and like too

many others, I was tempted to seek a substitute for the excitement produced by the military ardour in which I had lived, by indulging in the pernicious agitations of the gaming table. It is very likely, that if you speak of me in general society, you will be told that I have played high. . . . My dear Mrs. Barnaby, this is true. My large fortune gave me, as I foolishly imagined, a sort of right to play high if it amused me, and for a little while, I confess it did amuse me; . . . but I soon found that a gentleman was no match for those who made gambling a profession, and I lost largely, — so largely, indeed, that I must have saddled my acres with a mortgage, had not the legacy of the Duke d'Almafonte d'Aragona d'Estrada reached me just in time to prevent the necessity."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied the widow kindly; "and you have never hazarded so largely since, dear major, have you?"

"Oh! never. . . . In fact, I never enter a room now where any thing like high play is going on. . . . I cannot bear even to see it, and I believe I have in this way offended many who still permit themselves this hateful indulgence; offended them, indeed, to such a degree, that they perfectly hate me, and utter the most virulent abuse every time they hear my name mentioned; . . . but for this I care little; I know I am right, Mrs. Barnaby, and that what loses their friendship and esteem may be the means of gaining for me the regard of those, perhaps, on whom my whole happiness may depend during my future life."

The same dangerous sort of silence as before seemed creeping on them; but again the widow had the courage to break it, by recalling to the memory of her musing and greatly pre-occupied companion the anecdote respecting Waterloo which he had promised her.

"Waterloo!" said he, rousing himself. . . . "Ay, dearest Mrs. Barnaby, I *will* tell you that, though there are many reasons which render me very averse to speak of it lightly. In the first place, by those who know me not, it might be thought to look like boasting; and, moreover, if I alluded to it in any society capable of the baseness of repeating what I said, it might bring upon me very active, and indeed fatal, proofs of the dislike — I may say hatred — already felt against me in a certain quarter."

“Gracious Heaven, Major! . . . be careful then, I implore you, before whom you speak! There appear to be many strangers here, of whose characters it is impossible to know any thing . . . If you have enemies, they may be spies expressly sent to watch you.”

“I sometimes think so, I assure you. . . I catch such singular looks occasionally, as nothing else can account for; and the enemy I allude to is one who has power, as well as will, to punish by evil reports, if he cannot positively crush and ruin those who interfere with his ambition.”

“Is it possible? Thank Heaven! at least you can have no doubt of me . . . So, tell me, I beseech you to tell me, to whom it is that your alarming words refer?”

The major drew his chair close to Mrs. Barnaby, took one of her hands between both of his, and having gazed for a moment very earnestly in her face, whispered, —

“The Duke of Wellington!”

“Good God!” . . . exclaimed the widow, quite in an agony: “the Duke of Wellington! Is the Duke of Wellington your enemy, Major Allen?”

“To the teeth, my fairest! to the teeth!” replied the major, firmly setting the instruments he mentioned, and muttering through them with an appearance of concentrated rage, the outward demonstration of which was increased by the firmness of the grasp in which he continued to hold her hand.

“But how can this be so?” faltered Mrs. Barnaby. . . . “So brave a man as you! . . . one, too, who had distinguished himself so early! How can he be so base?”

“How can he be otherwise, my friend?” replied the major with increasing agitation, “when” . . . and here he lowered his voice still more, whispering almost in her very ear, “it is I—I,—Ferdinand Alexander Allen, who ought by right to be the Duke of Wellington, instead of him who now wears the title!”

“You astonish me more than I am able to express?”

“Of course I do. . . Such, however, is the fact. The battle of Waterloo would have been lost,—was lost, positively lost,—till I disdaining in such a moment to receive orders from one whom I perceived to be incompetent, rushed forward, almost knocking the Duke off his horse as I did so . . . sent *back the French army* like a flock of sheep before an advancing

lion . . . seized with my own hand on the cocked hat of Napoleon . . . drew it from his head, and actually flogged his horse with it till horse and rider together seemed well enough inclined to make the best of their way out of my reach. . . . God bless you, my dearest lady! the Duke of Wellington had no more to do in gaining the battle of Waterloo than you had. . . . I now leave you to judge what his feelings towards me are likely to be."

"Full of envy and hatred, beyond all doubt!" solemnly replied Mrs. Barnaby; "and I will not deny, Major Allen, that I think there is great danger in your situation. A person of such influence may do great injury, even to a man of your well-known noble character. But how extraordinary it is that no hint of this has ever transpired."

"I beg your pardon, my dear madam; this is very far from being the case. At your peaceful residence beneath the shades of Silverton Park, it is highly probable that you may have remained ignorant of the fact; but, in truth, the Duke's reputation among the people of England has suffered greatly; though no one, indeed, has yet proposed that his sword should be taken from him. The well-known circumstance of stones having been thrown at his windows . . . a fact which probably has never reached you . . . is quite sufficient to prove that the people must be aware that what the English army did at Waterloo was not done under his generalship. . . . No, no, England knows too well what she owed to that victory so to treat the general who achieved it; and had they not felt doubts as to who that general was, no stones would have been levelled at Apsley House. Many of the common soldiers—fine fellows!—have been bold enough to name me, and it is this that has so enraged the Duke, that there is nothing which he has not taught his emissaries to say against me. . . . I have been called swindler, black-leg, radical, horse-jockey, and I know not what beside; and I should not wonder, my charming friend, if sooner or later your friendship were put to the proof, by having to listen to similar calumnies against me; but now, you will be able to understand them aright, and know the source from whence they come."

"Well, I never did hear any thing so abominable in my life!" said Mrs. Barnaby warmly. . . . "Not content with taking credit to himself for all that was gained by your extra-

ordinary bravery, he has the baseness to attack your character ! It is too detestable ! and I only hope, that when I get among my own connections in town, I shall not have the misfortune of meeting him often. . . . I am certain I should not be able to resist saying something to show what I thought. Oh ! if he were really the brave man that he has been fancied to be, how he must have adored you for your undaunted courage ! And you really took Napoleon's hat off his head ? How excessively brave ! I wish I could have seen it, major ! I am sure I should have worshipped you. . . . I do so doat upon bravery !”

“ Sweet creature ! That devoted love of courage is one of the loveliest propensities of the female mind. Yes, I am brave — I do not scruple to say so ; and the idea that this quality is dear to you, will strengthen it in me four-fold. . . . But, my dear, my lovely friend ! I must bid you adieu. I expect the steward of my property in Yorkshire to-day, and I rather think he must be waiting for me now. . . . Soften, then, the pain of this parting, by telling me that I may come again !”

“ I should be sorry indeed to think this was our last meeting, Major Allen,” said the widow gently ; “ I am seldom out in the morning before the hour at which you called to-day.”

“ Farewell then !” said he, kissing her hand with an air of mixed tenderness and respect, “ farewell ! and remember that all I have breathed into your friendly ear must be sacred ; but I know it would be so without this injunction ; Mrs. Barnaby's majestic beauty conceals not the paltry spirit of a gossip !”

“ Indeed you are right ! indeed you are right ! To my feelings the communications of a friend are sweet, solemn pledges of regard, that it would be sacrilege to violate. Farewell, major !—farewell !”

CHAPTER V.

A YOUNG LADY'S PLOT. — A CONSULTATION, AND THE HAPPY RESULT OF IT. — A TERRIBLE INTERRUPTION, AND A DANGEROUS EXPEDITION. — CONFIDENTIAL INTERCOURSE.

MARY PETERS left Agnes considerably earlier than she had intended, in order to communicate to her mother a project which had entered her head during the short time they spent together. Though the project, however, was formed during their interview, the idea upon which it was founded had repeatedly occurred to her before, short as the time had been that was given for its ripening. This idea was suggested to her by the evident admiration of Mr. Stephenson for her friend ; on which she had meditated as they drove from the Mall to Rodney Place, as she brushed and papilloted her nut-brown curls before her glass, and as she strolled the next morning from her own home to that of Agnes ; it might plainly have been expressed thus . . . Frederick Stephenson is over head and ears in love with Agnes Willoughby.

Such was the idea : but the project was concerning a much more serious matter, — namely, that a marriage between the parties might easily be brought about ; and, moreover, that the effecting this would be one of the very best actions to which it could be possible to dedicate her endeavours.

To do Miss Peters justice, she was in general neither a busy body nor a match-maker ; but she was deeply touched by the melancholy feeling Agnes had expressed respecting her own position ; she felt, too, both the justness of it, and the utter helplessness of the poor girl herself either to change or amend it.

“ Nothing but her marrying can do it,” thought Mary ; “ and why should she not marry this young man, who is so evidently smitten with her ? . . . Poor Agnes ! . . . What a change — what a contrast it would be ! . . . And if mamma will help me, I am sure we may bring it about. He is perfectly independent, and violently in love already, . . . and she is a creature that appears more beautiful and more fascinating every time one sees her.”

It was exactly when her meditations reached this point that she discovered it to be necessary that she should go home directly, and home she accordingly went, luckily finding her mother alone in her dressing-room.

"I am delighted to find you by yourself, mamma," began Mary, "I have a great deal to say to you," and then followed a rapid repetition of all Agnes had just said to her.

"Is it not a dreadful situation, mamma?" she added.

"So dreadful, Mary," replied Mrs. Peters, "that were not the youngest of you about three years older than herself, I really think I should propose taking her as a finishing governess. Poor little thing! . . . what can we do for her?"

"Now listen, mamma," answered Mary, raising her hand gravely, as if to bespeak both silence and attention, "and do not, I implore you, mar the usefulness of what I am going to say by turning it into jest, . . . it is no jest, mother. Mr. Stephenson, the young man we saw last night, is most certainly captivated by the beauty of Agnes in no common degree. I was near enough to her all the evening to see plainly how things were going on; and were she less miserable in her present condition, I might think it a fair subject for a jest, or a bet perhaps on the chances for and against his proposing to her. But as it is,—thinking of her as I do, feeling for her as I do,—I think, mamma, that it is my duty to endeavour, by every means in my power, to turn these chances in her favour. Dearest mother, will you help me?"

"But what means have you, my dear girl?" replied Mrs. Peters gravely. "I believe I share both your admiration and your pity for Agnes as fully as you could desire; but I really see not what there is that we can with propriety do to obtain the object you propose . . . though I am quite aware of its value."

"I will ask you to do nothing, my dearest mother, in which you shall find a shadow of impropriety. Would there be any in inviting this young man to your house, should you chance to become better acquainted with him?"

"No; but I think we must take some strangely forward steps to lead to this better acquaintance."

"That will depend altogether upon his degree of inclination for it. Should he prove ritroso, I consent to draw off my

forces instantly ; but if, as I anticipate, he should push himself upon us as an acquaintance, I want you to promise that you will not on your part defeat his wishes, — nay, a little more perhaps . . . I would wish you, dear mother, to feel with me, that it would be right and righteous to promote them."

" I rather think it would, Mary, as you put the case. Agnes Willoughby is by no means lowly born : her father was a gentleman decidedly ; and I understood from my brother that the Comptons, though for some centuries, I believe, rather an impoverished race, derive their small property from ancestors of very great antiquity ; so there is nothing objectionable on that tender point . . . And for herself, pretty creature, she would certainly be an ornament and a grace as head and chieftainess of the most aristocratic establishment in the world ; so, as a matter of conscience, I have really no scruples at all ; but, as matter of *convenience*, I can only promise not to check, by any want of civility on my part, whatever advances the gentleman may choose to make. Will this content you, my little plotter ?"

" Yes . . . pretty well ; for I am not without hope that you will warm in the cause, if it goes on at all, and then, perhaps, I shall squeeze an invitation out of you, and so on. And, by the way, mamma, when are we to have our little musical *soirée* ? I believe young De Lacy is not going to stay much longer, and if he goes, what are we to do for our bass ?"

" We shall be puzzled, certainly. You may write the cards directly, Mary, if you will."

Mary rose at once to set about it ; but on opening a certain drawer in the commode, and examining its contents, she said, " We must send to the library, mamma ; there are not half enough cards here, . . . besides . . . I want you to walk with us, and I want Agnes to join the party. May I send her a note desiring her to come to take her luncheon here ?"

" I comprehend your tactics, my dear . . . Agnes is to walk with us just about three o'clock, when all the world are out and about . . . We want invitation cards, and may just as well, when we are out, go to the library for them ourselves. . . . There we shall be sure of seeing Mr. Stephenson . . ."

he will be very likely to join us &c. &c. &c. . . . Is not that your plan?"

"And if it is, mamma," replied Mary, laughing, "I see not that it contains any thing beyond what has been agreed to by our compact."

"Very well, Mademoiselle Talleyrand write your note."

This was promptly done, and promptly despatched, and reached Agnes about two minutes after Major Allen had taken his departure. She was aware of his visit; for Betty Jacks had obligingly opened her closet-door to inform her of it; and she now stood with the welcome note in her hand, meditating on the best manner of forwarding the petition to her aunt, not quite liking to send in the note itself, doubtful of Betty's delivering a message on the subject so as to avoid giving offence, but dreading, beyond all else, the idea of presenting herself before the major.

"Major Allen is still there, Jerningham, is he not? I have seen nothing of my aunt."

"No, miss, he is this moment gone and a beautiful, sweet man he is, too."

Agnes hesitated no longer, but, with Mary's note in her hand, entered the drawing-room to ask leave to obey the summons it contained. She found Mrs. Barnaby in a state of considerable, but very delightful agitation. The album was open before her, her two elbows rested on the table, and her hands shaded her eyes, which were fixed on the interesting name of Isabella d'Almafonte, in a fit of deep abstraction.

Agnes uttered her request, but was obliged to repeat it twice before the faculties of the widow were sufficiently recalled to things present for her to be able to return a coherent answer. When at length, however, she understood what was asked, she granted her permission with quite as much pleasure as Agnes received it. At that moment she could endure nothing but solitude, or Major Allen, and eagerly answered "Oh yes, my dear! go, go; I do not want you at all."

A liberated bird is not more quick in reaching the shelter of the desired wood, than was Agnes in making her way from Sion Row to Rodney Place; and so great was her joy at finding herself there, that for the moment she forgot all her sorrows, and talked of the ball as if she had not felt infinitely

more pain than pleasure there. As soon as the luncheon was ended, Mrs. Peters and Elizabeth, Mary and Agnes, set off upon their walk, not "over the hills, and far away," as heretofore, but along the well-paved ways that led most certainly to the resorts of their fellow mortals. Lucy and James, having heard that the evening for their music party was fixed at the distance only of one fortnight, declared that it was absolutely necessary to devote the interval to "practice," and therefore they remained at home.

If the plan of Mary Peters was such as her mother had described it, nothing could have been more successful; for even before they reached the library, they met Mr. Stephenson and Colonel Hubert. The moment the former perceived them, he stepped forward, quitting the arm of his friend, who certainly rather relaxed than accelerated his pace, and having paid his compliments with the cordial air of an old acquaintance to Mrs. Peters and Elizabeth, passed them and took his station beside Agnes. Both she and her friend received his eager salutation with smiles: Mary, as we know, had her own motives for this; and Agnes had by no means forgotten how seasonably he had led her off on the preceding evening from her aunt, Major Allen, and the forsaken tea-table. Her bright smile, however, soon faded as she marked the stiff bow by which Colonel Hubert returned Mrs. Peters's civil recognition of him. He too passed the first pair of ladies, and joined himself to the second; but though he bowed to both of them, it seemed that he turned and again took the arm of Stephenson, solely for the purpose of saying to him, "Are you going to give up your walk to the Wells, Frederick?"

"Most decidedly, *mon cher*," was the cavalier reply.

"Then I must wish you good morning, I believe," said Colonel Hubert, attempting to withdraw his arm.

"No, don't," cried the gay young man good-humouredly, and retaining his arm with some show of violence; "I will not let you go without me: you will find nothing there, depend upon it, to reward you on this occasion for your pertinacity of purpose."

Colonel Hubert yielded himself to this wilfulness, and passively, as it seemed, accompanied the party into the library. Nothing could be more agreeable than the animated conversation of young Stephenson: he talked to all the ladies in turn,

contrived to discover a multitude of articles of so interesting a kind, that it was necessary they should examine and talk about them ; and finally, bringing forward the book of names, fairly beguiled Mrs. Peters and her daughters into something very like a little gossip concerning some among them.

It was while they were thus employed that Colonel Hubert approached Agnes, who, of course, could take no part in it, and said, . . . "Are you going to remain long at Clifton, Miss Willoughby?"

Agnes blushed deeply as he drew near, and his simple question was answered in a voice so tremulous, that he pitied the agitation (resulting, as he supposed, from their meeting in the morning) which she evinced ; and feeling perhaps that she was not to blame because his headstrong friend was determined to fall in love with her, he spoke again, and in a gentler voice said, "I hope you have forgiven me for the blunt advice I ventured to give you this morning."

"Forgiven!" repeated Agnes, looking up at him, and before her glance fell again it was dimmed by a tear. "I can never forget your kindness!" she added, but so nearly in a whisper, that he instantly became aware that her friends had not been made acquainted with the adventure, and that it was not her wish they should be. He therefore said no more on the subject ; but, led by some impulse that seemed not, certainly, to proceed from either unkindness or contempt, he continued to converse with her for several minutes, and long enough indeed to make her very nearly forget the party of friends whose heads continued to be congregated round the librarian's register of the Clifton beau monde.

Frederick Stephenson meanwhile was very ably prosecuting the object he had in view, namely, to establish himself decidedly as an acquaintance of Mrs. Peters ; and so perfectly *comme il faut* in all respects was the tone of herself and her daughters, that he was rapidly forgetting such a being as Mrs. Barnaby existed, and solacing his spirit by the persuasion that the only girl he had ever seen whom he could *really* love was surrounded by connections as elegant and agreeable as his *exigeante* family could possibly require. Nor, to say truth, was his friend greatly behind-hand in the degree of oblivion which he permitted to fall upon his faculties respecting this object of *his horror and detestation*. It was not very easy, indeed, to

remember Mrs. Barnaby, while Agnes, awakened by a question as to what part of England it was in which she had enjoyed the rural liberty of which he had heard her speak, poured forth all her ardent praise on the tranquil beauty of Empton.

"It is not," said she, beguiled, by the attention with which he listened to her, into forgetfulness of the awe he had hitherto inspired,— "it is not so majestic in its beauty as Clifton; we have no mighty rocks at Empton—no winding river that quietly as it flows, seems to have cut its own path amongst them; but the parsonage is the very perfection of a soft, tranquil, flowery retreat, where neither sorrow nor sin have any business whatever."

"And was Empton parsonage your home, Miss Wil loughby?"

"Yes . . . for five dear happy years," replied Agnes, in an accent from which all gaiety had fled.

"You were not born at Empton, then?" — "No; I was only educated there; but it was there at least that my heart and mind were born, and I do not believe that I shall ever feel quite at home any where else."

"It is rather early for you to say that, is it not?" said Colonel Hubert with a smile more calculated to increase her confidence than to renew her awe. . . . "May I ask how old you are?"

"I shall be seventeen in August," replied Agnes, blushing at being obliged to confess herself so very young.

"She might be my daughter," thought Colonel Hubert, while a shade of melancholy passed over his countenance which it puzzled Agnes to interpret. But he asked her no more questions; and the conversation seemed languishing, when Frederick Stephenson, beginning to think that it was his turn now to talk to Agnes, and pretty well satisfied, perhaps, that he had made a favourable impression upon the Peters family, left the counter and the subscription book, and crossed to the place where she had seated herself. Colonel Hubert was still standing by her side, but he instantly made way for his friend; and had he at that moment spoken aloud the thoughts of his heart, he might have been heard to say,— "There is nothing here to justify the rejection of any family . . . she is *perfect alike in person and in mind . . . things must take their course: I will urge his departure no further.*"

Scarcely, however, had these thoughts made their rapid way across his brain, before his ears were assailed by the sound of a laugh, which he recognised in an instant to be that of Mrs. Barnaby. A flush of heightened colour mounted to his very eyes, and he felt conscience-struck, as if whatever might hereafter happen to Stephenson, he should hold himself responsible for it, because he had mentally given his consent to his remaining where the danger lay. And well might the sound and sight of Mrs. Barnaby overturn all such yielding thoughts. She came more rouged, more ringleted, more bedizened with feathers and flowers, and more loud in voice than ever. . . . She came, too, accompanied by Major Allen.

No thunder-cloud, sending forth its flashings before it, ever threw a more destructive shadow over the tranquil brightness of a smiling landscape, than did this *entrée* of the facetious pair over the happy vivacity of the party already in possession of the shop. Mrs. Peters turned very red; Miss Willoughby turned very pale; Mary stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and remained as mute as if she had been shot; even the good-natured Elizabeth looked prim; and the two gentlemen, though in different ways, betrayed an equally strong consciousness of the change that had come over them. Mr. Stephenson put on the hat which he had laid beside him on the counter; and though he drew still nearer to Agnes than before, it was without addressing a word to her. Colonel Hubert immediately passed by them, and left the shop.

This last circumstance was the only one which could at that moment have afforded any relief to Agnes; it at once restored her composure and presence of mind, though it did not quite bring back the happy smiles with which she had been conversing five short minutes before.

"Ah! my sister Peters and the children here!" cried Mrs. Barnaby, flouncing gaily towards them. . . . "I thought we should meet you. . . . What beautiful weather, isn't it? How d'ye do, sir? (to Mr. Stephenson.) I think you were among our young ladies' partners last night. . . . Charming ball, wasn't it? . . . Dear Major Allen, do look at these Bristol stones! ain't they as bright as diamonds? . . . Well, Agnes, you have had your luncheon, I suppose, with the dear girls, and now you will be ready to go shopping with me. We are going into Bristol, and I will take you with us."

Agnes listened to her doom in silence, and no more thought of appealing from it than the poor criminal who listens to his sentence from the bench; but Mr. Stephenson turned an imploring look on Mrs. Peters, which spoke so well what he wished to express, that she exerted herself so far as to say, "We had hoped, Mrs. Barnaby, that you meant to have spared Agnes to us for the rest of the day, and we shall be much obliged if you will leave her with us."

"You are always very kind, dear Margaret," returned the widow, "but I really want Agnes just now. . . . She shall come to you, however, some other time. . . . Good-by! good-by!—we have no time to lose. . . . Come, Agnes, let's be off."

A silent look was all the leave-taking that passed between Agnes and her greatly annoyed friends. Mrs. Barnaby took her arm under her own, and as soon as they quitted the shop bestowed the other on Major Allen; she was in high spirits, which found vent in a loud laugh as soon as they had turned the corner.

"What a stuck-up fellow that great tall colonel is, Major Allen," said she. "Do you know any thing of him? . . . If I am not greatly mistaken, he is as proud as Lucifer."

"I assure you, if he is proud, my dear madam, it must be a pride of the very lowest and vilest kind, merely derived from the paltry considerations of family and fortune; for, *entre nous*, he is very far from having been a distinguished officer. The Duke of Wellington, indeed, has always been most ridiculously partial to him; but you," lowering his voice, "you are a pretty tolerable judge of what *his* good opinion is worth."

"Yes, yes, major. . . . I shall never be taken in there again. . . . Why, Agnes, how you drag, child! I shall be tired to death before I get to Bristol, if you walk so."

"Will the young lady take my other arm?" said the major.

"Thank you, dear major! . . . You are very kind. Go round, Agnes, and take the major's arm."

"No, I thank you, aunt; I do not want any arm. I will walk beside you, if you please, without taking hold of you at all."

"Nonsense, child! . . . That will look too particular, major," . . . said the widow, turning to him; upon which,

without waiting further parley, Major Allen dropped the arm he held, and gaily placed himself between the two ladies, saying, "Now then, fair ladies, I have an arm for each."

Agnes felt the greatest possible longing to run away; but whether it would have strengthened into a positive resolution to do so, upon once more feeling the touch of the major's hand, which upon her retreating he very vigorously extended towards her, it is impossible to say, for at that moment the sound of a rapidly advancing pair of boots was heard on the pavement behind them, and in the next Mr. Stephenson was at her side. He touched his hat to Mrs. Barnaby, and then addressing Agnes, said, "If you are going to walk to Bristol, I hope you will permit me to accompany you, . . . for I am going there too."

Agnes very frankly replied, "Thank you!" and without a moment's hesitation accepted the arm he offered.

"I am sure you are very obliging, Mr. Stephenson," said Mrs. Barnaby, "and we shall certainly be able to walk with much greater convenience. I think you two had better go before, and then we can see that you don't run off, you know."

This lively sally was followed by a gay little tittering on the part both of the major and the lady, as they stood still for Mr. Stephenson and the suffering Agnes to pass them.

The young man seemed to have lost all his vivacity: he spoke very little, and even that little had the air of being uttered because he felt obliged to say something. Poor Agnes was certainly in no humour for conversation, and would have rejoiced in his silence, had it not made her feel that whatever might be the motive for his thus befriending her, he derived no pleasure from it. Ere they had walked a mile, however, an accident occurred which effectually roused him from the dejection that appeared to have fallen upon his spirits. A herd of bullocks met them on the road, one of which, over-driven and irritated by a cur that worried him, darted suddenly from the road up to the path, and made towards them with its horns down, and its tail in the air. On seeing this, the young man seized Agnes in his arms, and sprang with her down the bank into the road. The animal, whose object was rather to leave an enemy behind him, than to do battle with any other, passed on towards the major and his fair companion, who were at a considerable

distance behind, leaving Agnes trembling indeed, and somewhat confused, but quite unhurt, and full of gratitude for the prompt activity that had probably saved her. As soon as she had in some degree recovered her composure, she turned back to ascertain how her aunt had fared, Mr. Stephenson assiduously attending her, and they presently came within sight of a spectacle that, had any mirth been in them, must have drawn it forth.

Major Allen, by no means approving the style in which the animal appeared inclined to charge them, had instantly perceived, as Mr. Stephenson had done before, that the only means of getting effectually out of its way was by jumping down the bank, which at that point was considerably higher than it was a few hundred yards farther on; nevertheless, though neither very light nor very active, he might have achieved the descent well enough had he been alone. But what was he to do with Mrs. Barnaby? She uttered a piercing cry, and threw herself directly upon his bosom, exclaiming, "Save me, major!—save me!"

In this dilemma the major proved himself an old soldier. To shake off the lady, he felt (in every sense of the word) was quite impossible; but there was no reason that she should stifle him; and therefore grasping her with great ardour, he half carried, half pushed her towards the little precipice, and skilfully placing himself so that, if they fell, she should fall first, he cried out manfully, "Now spring!" And spring they did, but in such a sort, that the lady measured her length in the dust, a circumstance that greatly broke the major's fall; for, although he made a considerable effort to roll beyond her, he finally pitched with his knees full upon her, thus lessening his descent very materially.

When the young people reached them, they had both recovered their equilibrium, but not their composure. Major Allen was placed with one knee in the dust, and on the other supporting Mrs. Barnaby, who, with her head reclining on his shoulder, seemed to have a very strong inclination to indulge herself with a fainting fit. Her gay dress was lamentably covered with dust, her feathers broken and hanging distressingly over her eyes, and her whole appearance, as well as that of the hero who supported her, forlorn and dejected in the *extrema*

"Are you hurt, aunt?" said Agnes, approaching her.

"Hurt!" . . . am I hurt? . . . Gracious Heaven! what a question! If my life be spared, I shall consider it little short of a miracle. . . . Oh! Major Allen," she continued with a burst of sobbing, "where should I have now been . . . but for you? . . ."

"Trampled or tossed, Mrs. Barnaby . . . trampled or tossed to death decidedly," replied the major, not wishing to lessen her sense of obligation, yet restrained by the presence of witnesses from expressing his feelings with all the ardour he might otherwise have shown.

"Most true! — most true!" she replied. "Never shall I be able to express the gratitude I feel!"

"Can you not stand up, aunt?" said Agnes, whose cheeks were crimsoned at the absurdity of the scene. "How will you be able to get home if you cannot stand?"

"God knows, child!" . . . God only knows what is yet to become of me . . . Oh! major, I trust myself wholly to you."

Poor Agnes uttered a sound not much unlike a groan, upon which Mr. Stephenson, on whom it fell like a spur, urging him to save her from an exhibition so painfully ridiculous (for it was quite evident that Mrs. Barnaby was not really hurt), proposed that he should escort Miss Willoughby with all possible speed back to Clifton, and despatch thence a carriage to bring Mrs. Barnaby home.

Major Allen, who desired nothing more ardently than to get rid of him, seconded the proposal vehemently.

"You are quite right, sir; it is the only thing to be done," he said; "and if you will hasten to perform this, I will endeavour so to place Mrs. Barnaby as to prevent her suffering any great inconvenience while waiting till the carriage shall arrive."

"Ought I not to remain with my aunt?" said Agnes to Mr. Stephenson, but in a whisper that was heard only by himself.

"In my opinion you certainly ought not," he replied in the same tone. "Believe me," he added. "I have many reasons for saying so."

Nothing but her earnest desire to do that, whatever it might be, which was the least improper, (for that, as she truly felt,

was all that was left her,) could have induced Agnes to propose inflicting so terrible a penance on herself; but strangely as she was obliged to choose her counsellor, there was a grave seriousness in his manner which convinced her he had not answered her lightly; and therefore, as her aunt said not a word to detain her, she set off on her return with as much speed as she could use, saying as she departed, "Depend upon it, aunt, there shall be no delay."

Mr. Stephenson again offered her his arm; but she now declined it, and the young man for some time walked silently by her side, wishing to speak to her, yet honestly doubting his own power of doing so with the composure he desired.

At length, however, the silence became embarrassing, and he broke it by saying, with something of abruptness,—

"Will you forgive me, Miss Willoughby, if I venture to forget for a moment, how short a time it is since I have had the happiness of knowing you, . . . will you forgive me if I speak to you like a friend?"

"Indeed I will, and be very thankful too," replied Agnes composedly, . . . for his manner had taught her to feel assured that she had no cause to fear him.

"You are very kind," he resumed, with some little embarrassment; "but I feel that it is taking an almost unwarrantable liberty; and were it not that this walk offers an opportunity which I think I ought not to lose, I might perhaps endeavour to say what I wish to Mrs. Peters, . . . I allude to Major Allen, Miss Willoughby! I wish you could lead your aunt to understand that he is not a person fit for your society. Though he is probably a stranger here, he is well known elsewhere as a needy gambler, and, in short, a most unprincipled character in every way."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Agnes, "what shall I do?"

"Can you not venture to hint this to your aunt?" said he.

"She would probably be very angry," replied Agnes with spontaneous frankness; "but what is worse than that, she would, I know, insist upon my telling her where I heard it."

"Say that you heard it from me, Miss Willoughby," replied the young man.

New as Agnes was to the world and its ways, she felt that *there was something very honourable and frank in this proceeding, and it produced so great a degree of confidence in*

return, that she answered in a tone of the most unembarrassed friendliness.

"Will you give me leave, Mr. Stephenson, to repeat this to Mrs. Peters and Mary? . . . They will know so much better than I do what use to make of it."

"Indeed I think you are right," he replied eagerly, "and then the anger that you speak of, will not fall on you."

"It will not in that case, I think, fall on any one," said Agnes. "My aunt has fortunately a great respect for Mrs. Peters; and if anybody can have influence over her mind, she may."

Can it be wondered at if, after this, the conversation went on improving in its tone of ease and confidence? It had begun, on the side of the young man, with a very sincere resolution not to suffer his admiration for his lovely companion to betray him into a serious attachment to one so unfortunately connected; but, before they reached Sion Row, he had arrived at so perfect a conviction that he could nowhere find so pure-minded and right-thinking a being to share his fortune, and to bless his future life, that he only refrained from telling her so, from a genuine feeling of respect, which perhaps the proudest peeress in the land might have failed to inspire.

"No," thought he, "it is not now, while she is compelled by accident to walk beside me, that I will pour out my heart and all its love before her, but the time shall come. . ."

Agnes, ere they parted again, appealed to him for his opinion whether she *ought* to go in the carriage sent to meet her aunt.

"No, indeed, I think not," he replied. "Has she no maid, Miss Willoughby, who could go for her?"

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Agnes, greatly relieved; "I can send Jerningham."

"Sweet creature!" whispered the enamoured Frederick to his heart, "what a delicious task to advise, to guide, to cherish such a being as that!"

His respectful bow at parting, the earnest, silent, lingering look he fixed upon her fair face ere he turned from the door that was opened to receive her, might have said much to a heart on the *qui vive* to meet his half way; but Agnes did not observe it; she was looking up towards the windmill, and *thinking of her early morning walk, and its termination.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE READER IS LET INTO A SECRET, AND THE YOUNG LADY'S PLOT PROVED TO BE OF NO AVAIL. — A JUDICIOUS MODE OF OBTAINING INFORMATION. — A HAPPY AND VERY WELL-TIMED MEETING.

"WELL, Mary! . . . I suppose you are wishing yourself joy on the success of your plottings and plannings," said Mrs. Peters to her daughter about ten days after this memorable walk on the Bristol road, for during that interval much had occurred that seemed to promise success to her wishes. In fact, Frederick Stephenson had quietly become a regular visitor at Rodney Place, and the power of Agnes to accept the constant invitations which brought her there likewise increased in exact proportion to the widow's growing delight in the *tête-à-tête* visits of the major. The friendly hint of Mr. Stephenson had produced no effect whatever, excepting indeed that it tended greatly to increase the tone of friendly intercourse between the Peters family and himself. He had released Agnes from the task of mentioning the matter at all, and took an early opportunity of confiding to Mrs. Peters his ideas on the subject. She received the communication with the gratitude it really deserved, but confessed that Mrs. Barnaby was a person so every way disagreeable to her, that the task of attempting to guide her would be extremely repugnant to her feelings.

"But Miss Willoughby!" . . . said Frederick; "it is for her sake that one would wish to keep this odious woman from exposing herself to ruin and disgrace, if possible."

"And for her sake I will do it," answered Mrs. Peters. "She is as deserving of all care as her aunt is unworthy of it."

This reply convinced Mr. Stephenson that Mrs. Peters was one of the most discerning as well as most amiable women in the world, but no other advantage arose from the praiseworthy determination of the "dear Margaret;" for when that lady said to her gravely, at the very first opportunity she could find, —

"Pray, Mrs. Barnaby, do you know any thing of that Major Allen's private character?" The answer she received was,— "Yes, Mrs. Peters, a great deal, . . . and more, probably, than any other person whatever at Clifton; . . . and I know, too, that there are agents—paid, hired agents—employed in circulating the most atrocious lies against him."

"I am not one of them, I assure you, madam," said Mrs. Peters, abruptly leaving her seat, and determined never again to recur to the subject; a comfortable resolution, to which she reconciled her conscience by remembering the evident devotion of Mr. Stephenson to Agnes, the symptoms of which were daily becoming less and less equivocal.

It was within a few hours after this short colloquy with the widow, that Mrs. Peters thus addressed her daughter, "Well, Mary! . . . I suppose you are wishing yourself joy on the success of your plottings and plannings."

"Why, yes," . . . replied Mary; "I think we are getting on pretty well, and unless I greatly mistake, it will be the fault of Agnes, and of no one else, if she suffers much more from being under the protection of our precious aunt Barnaby."

Mrs. Peters and Mary were perfectly right in their premises, but utterly wrong in their conclusion. Mr. Stephenson was indeed passionately in love with Agnes, and had already fully made up his mind to propose to her, so soon as their acquaintance had lasted long enough to render such a step decently permissible, which, according to his calculations, would be in about a fortnight after he had first danced with her. In short, he was determined to find a favourable opportunity, on the evening of Mrs. Peters's promised music party, to declare his passion to her; for he had already learned to know that few occasions offer, in the ordinary intercourse of society, more favourable for a *tête-à-tête* than a crowded concert-room.

Thus far, therefore, the observations and reasonings of Agnes's watchful friends were perfectly correct. But, alas! they saw only the surface of things. There was an under current running the other way of which they never dreamed, and of which, even had it been laid open to their view, they *would neither have been able to comprehend or believe the*

power. As to the heart of Agnes, by some strange fatality they had never taken it into their consideration at all, or at any rate had conceived it so beyond all doubt inclined the way they wished, that no single word or thought amidst all their deliberations was ever bestowed upon it. . . . But the heart of Agnes was fixedly, devotedly, and for ever given to another.

No wonder, indeed, that such an idea had never suggested itself to her friends, for who could that other be? Could it be James, her first partner, her first walking companion, and very nearly the first young man she had ever spoken to in her life? Assuredly not; for had she been asked, she could not have told whether his eyes were blue or black, hardly whether he were short or tall, and certainly not whether she had seen him twenty times, or only twelve, since their first meeting.

Who, then, could it be? There was but one other person whom the accidents of the last important fortnight had thrown constantly in her way; and Mrs. Peters and Mary would as soon have thought that the young Agnes had conceived a passion for the pope, as for the stately, proud, reserved Colonel Hubert.

Yet "she could an if she would" have told her how far above all other mortals his noble head rose proudly, she could have told that on his lofty brow her soul read volumes, she could have told that in the colour of his thoughtful eye, the hue of heaven seemed deepened into black by the rich lash that shaded it. . . . All this she could have told; and, moreover, could have counted, with most faithful arithmetic, not only how many times she had seen him, but how many times his eyes had turned towards her, how many times he had addressed a word to her, how many smiles had been permitted to cheer her heart, how many frowns had chilled her spirit as they passed over his countenance. . . . Little could any one have guessed all this, but so it was; and Frederick Stephenson, with all his wealth, his comeliness, and kind heart to boot, had no more chance of being accepted as a husband by the poor, dependant Agnes Willoughby, than the lowest hind that ploughs the soil by the proudest lady that owns it.

* * * * *

Meanwhile my real heroine, the Widow Barnaby, thought

little of Agnes, or any other lady but herself, and less still perhaps of Mr. Stephenson, or any other gentleman but the major. The affair on the Bristol road, though injurious to her dress, and rather dusty, and in some degree disagreeable at the time, had wonderfully forced on the tender intimacy between them. Yet Mrs. Barnaby was not altogether so short-sighted as by-standers might suppose; and though she freely permitted herself the pleasure of being made love to, she determined to be very sure of the major's rent-roll before she bestowed herself and her fortune upon him; for, notwithstanding her flirting propensities, the tender passion had ever been secondary in her heart to a passion for wealth and finery; and not the best-behaved and most discreet dowager that ever lived, was more firmly determined to take care of herself, and make a good bargain, "*if ever she married again,*" than was our flighty, flirting Widow Barnaby.

She was fully aware that many difficulties lay in the way of her getting the information she wanted. In the first place, she had no acquaintance except the Peterses, who were his declared enemies; and she loved both justice and the major too well to let his happiness (which was now avowedly dependant upon her accepting his hand) rest on such doubtful testimony. . . . And, secondly, there was considerable caution required in the manner of asking questions *so special* as those she wished to propose, lest they might reach the ears of her lover; and it was necessary, if the tender affair finally terminated in wedlock, that it should be brought about without any appearance on her side of such sordid views, lest a suspicion might arise on his that her own wealth was not quite so great as she wished him to believe. Respecting settlements, she had already decided upon what she should propose. . . . she would make over the whole of her fortune unconditionally to him, provided he would make her a settlement of one poor thousand a year for life in return.

Some days passed away after the major had actually proposed and been conditionally accepted. . . . in case a few weeks' longer acquaintance confirmed their affection. . . . before Mrs. Barnaby had discovered any method by which she might satisfy her anxious curiosity respecting the actual state of Major Allen's affairs. During this time she was willing *to allow, even to herself,* that her affections were very deeply

engaged, but yet she steadfastly adhered to her resolution of not bestowing upon him the blessing of her hand, till she learned from some one besides himself that he was a man of large fortune.

At length, when almost in despair of meeting with any one whom she could trust on such a subject, it occurred to her that Betty Jacks, who had not only continued to grow till she was nearly as tall as her mistress, but had made such proficiency in the ways of the world since she left Silverton, as rendered her exceedingly acute, might make acquaintance with Major Allen's groom, and learn from him what was generally considered to be the amount of his master's income. The idea had hardly struck her before she determined to put it in execution; and having rung the bell, Betty, after the usual interval that it took her to climb from the kitchen, stood before her.

"Come in, Jerningham," said Mrs. Barnaby, "and shut the door. I have something particular that I wish to say to you."

Betty anticipated a scolding, and looked sulky.

"I am very well satisfied with you, Jerningham," resumed the lady, "and I called you up chiefly to say that you may have the cap with the pink ribands that I put off yesterday morning."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Betty, turning to go.

"Stay a moment, Jerningham: I have something I want to talk to you about."

Betty advanced, and took hold of the back of the chair to support her lengthy person, a habit which she had fallen into from the frequent long confidential communications her lady was accustomed to hold with her.

"Pray, Jerningham, do you know Major Allen's groom?" inquired Mrs. Barnaby in a gentle voice.

"Lor! no, ma'am; how should I come for to know his groom?"

"Nay, my good girl, there would be no harm in it if you did. I have remarked that he is a particularly smart, respectable-looking servant, and I must say I think it would be quite as well if such a good-looking girl as you did make acquaintance with the servant of a gentleman like Major Allen; it would give you a proper protector and companion,

Jerningham, in a Sunday evening walk, or any thing of that kind ; and really it looks as if he did not think you worth noticing, considering how intimate the two families are become."

"Oh! for that, ma'am, I don't believe the young man would have any objection ; and I don't mean to say as how I never spoke to him," replied Betty.

"Very well, Jerningham, that is just what I wanted to know ; because, if you are sufficiently acquainted to speak, such a sharp clever girl as you are, would find it easy enough to improve the intimacy, and that's what I want you to do, Jerningham. And then I want you, some fine evening, perhaps, after I have had my tea, to let him take a walk with you ; and when you are talking of one thing and the other, I want you to find out whether his master is reckoned a rich gentleman or a poor one. . . . Do you understand, Jerningham ?"

Betty Jack's black eyes kindled into very keen intelligence at this question, and she answered with very satisfactory vivacity, "Yes, ma'am, I understands."

"Well, then, set about it as soon as you can ; and remember, Jerningham, if he asks any questions about me, that you make him understand my fortune is a great deal larger than it appears to be, which it really is, you know,—only just now I am travelling quietly by way of a change. If you do all this cleverly and well, I will give you my old parasol, which only wants a stitch or two to make it quite fit to use."

"Thankee, ma'am. . . I could find him in a minute at the beer-shop, if you like it."

"Well, then, do so, my good girl, and you may say, if you will, that you could take a walk with him this evening."

The arrangement was probably made without great difficulty, for on the following morning Betty was ready with her report. Any detailed account of the interview between the major's man and the widow's woman would be unnecessary, as the girl's account of it was what principally affected the interests of our widow, and that shall be faithfully given.

Betty Jacks made her appearance in the drawing-room as soon as Agnes had left it after breakfast, with that look of smirking confidence which usually enlivens the countenance of a *soubrette* when she knows she has something to say worth listening to.

Her anxious mistress instantly saw that the commission had not been in vain.

"Well, Jerningham!" she cried with a deep respiration that was more like panting than sighing, "what news do you bring me?"

"All that is best and honourablest for the major, ma'am. His man William says that he is a noble gentleman every way, with plenty of money to spend and plenty of spirit to spend it with; and that happy will the lady be who wins his heart, and comes to the glory and honour of being his wife."

"That is enough, Jerningham," said the happy Mrs. Barnaby. . . . "You seem to have behaved extremely well, and with a great deal of cleverness; and as I see I may trust to your good sense and prudent behaviour, I will give you leave to go to the play at Bristol, and will give you a gallery ticket any evening that the major's worthy and faithful servant may like to take you. . . . Indeed, I should not mind giving him a gallery ticket too, and so you may tell him."

Betty Jacks turned her head to look out of the window, and a furtive sort of smile kindled in her eye for a moment; but she thanked her mistress for her kindness, and then made her exit with great decorum.

It was just two days after this that Mrs. Barnaby yielded to Major Allen's request that she would taste the air of a delicious morning by taking a little turn with him in the Mall. Twice had they enjoyed the sunny length of the pavement, indulging in that sort of tender conversation which their now fully avowed mutual attachment rendered natural, when, in making their third progress, they were met by a gentleman somewhat younger than the major, but with much his style of dress and whiskered fashion, who, the instant he saw Major Allen, uttered a cry of joy, ran towards him, and caught his hand, which he not only shook affectionately, but even pressed to his heart with an air of the most touching friendship.

"My dearest Maintry!" exclaimed the major, "what an unexpected pleasure is this! When did you reach England? What brings you here? Then, suddenly recollecting himself, he turned to Mrs. Barnaby, and entreated her forgiveness for the liberty he had taken in thus stopping her.

"But I well know," he added, "that your generous heart

will find an excuse for me in its own warm feelings, when I tell you that Captain Maintry is the oldest friend I have in the world—the oldest and the dearest. . . . We have served together, Mrs. Barnaby we have fought side by side through many a well-contested field and since universal peace has sheathed our swords, we have shared each other's hospitality, hunted on each other's grounds, studied nature and mankind together, and, in a word, have lived and loved as brothers, and yet we have now been parted for two years. A large property has devolved to him from his mother's family in Westphalia, and the necessity of attending to his farms and his signiorial privileges, has separated him thus long from his friend. You will forgive me, then, my beloved Martha! Maintry from thee I can hide nothing! you have told me a thousand times that I should never be brought to resign my freedom to mortal woman. . . . Look here! and tell me if you can wonder that such vaunting independence can attach to me no longer?"

Nothing could be more kind than Mrs. Barnaby's reply to this, nothing more gracious than Captain Maintry's flattering answer; and the next minute they were all walking on together as if already united by the tenderest ties. Many interesting questions and answers passed between the two gentlemen concerning absent friends of high rank and great distinction, as well as some good-natured friendly questions on the part of Captain Maintry relative to many of the Major's principal tenants in Yorkshire, as honourable to the kind feelings of the inquirer as to the good conduct and respectability of the worthy individuals inquired for.

After all this had lasted most agreeably for some time, Captain Maintry suddenly paused, and said to his friend,—

"My dear Allen, the pleasure of seeing you, and the unexpected introduction to this honoured lady, have together turned my brain, I believe, or I should have told you at once that I have brought letters from Prince Hursteinberg for you which require an immediate answer. I never heard one man speak of another as he does of you, Allen; he declares you are the most noble character he ever met with in any country, and that is no light thing for such a man as the prince to say. His letter is to ask whether you can spare him a hunting mare of your own breeding, and three couple of those

famous pointers for which your principal estate is so celebrated. He made me promise that I would see that you sent off an answer by the first post, for if you cannot oblige him in this he must apply elsewhere. You know his passion for *la chasse*, and he must not be disappointed. Come, my dear fellow . . . tear yourself away from this attractive lady for one short hour, and then the business will be done."

"Certainly not till I have seen Mrs. Barnaby safely home," replied the major gravely.

"Then you will be too late for the post. . . . We have told Mrs. Barnaby that we are brothers . . . let her see you treat me as such . . . Trust her to my care; I will escort her to her own home while you go for an hour or so to yours. I have left the packet with your faithful William . . . By the by, I am glad to see that you still retain that capital good fellow about you . . . An honest servant is worth his weight in gold, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . There, Allen, you see, I am in possession of the lady's arm; so you may be off, and I will join you as soon as I have escorted her to her quarters."

"Most cordially do I congratulate my friend, madam," said Captain Maintry, as soon as Major Allen had taken his leave, "on the happy prospects that have opened before him. . . . To see you, and not appreciate his felicity, is impossible. Friendship may conquer envy, but it cannot render us blind! . . . Nor is it Major Allen alone whom I must congratulate; . . . permit me to indulge my feelings towards that long-tryed and dearly-valued friend, by telling you, Mrs. Barnaby, that you are a very happy woman indeed! . . . Such worth, such honour, are rarely — alas! too rarely — met with in man. And then he has such a multitude of minor good qualities, as I may call them, such an absence of all ostentation . . . nobody would believe from his manner of living that he possessed one of the finest estates in Yorkshire . . . yet such is the fact. . . . His courage, too, is transcendently great, and his temper the sweetest in the world! . . . Yet this man, Mrs. Barnaby, great and good as he is, has not been able to escape enemies. . . . You have no idea of the lies that have been put in circulation concerning him by those who envy his reputation, and hate his noble qualities."

"I know it, Captain Maintry, but too well," replied Mrs. Barnaby; . . . "but a woman who could be influenced by

such idle and malevolent reports would be unworthy to become his wife ; and for myself, I can assure you that, far from its producing the desired effect upon me, such malignity only binds me to him more closely."

"There spoke a heart worthy of him!" fervently exclaimed the captain. . . . "And I doubt not, my dearest madam, that these generous feelings will be put to the proof, for . . . I blush for my species as I say it . . . there are many who, when they hear of his approaching happiness, will put every sort of wickedness in action to prevent it."

This conversation, with a few little amiable sentiments in addition from both parties, brought them to the door of the widow's home, when Captain Maintry resisted her invitation to enter upon the plea that he must devote every moment he could command to his friend, as unhappily he was obliged to return to Bath, on business of the greatest importance, with as little delay as possible.

* * * * *

After this it was quite in vain that even the amiable, soft-hearted Elizabeth,—who had grown exceedingly ashamed, of the by, of her speaking acquaintance with Major Allen,—it was in vain that even she ventured to hint that she believed Major Allen was no longer invited any where . . . Mrs. Barnaby knew all about it, on better authority than any one else, and she quietly made up her mind to leave Clifton, and proceed to Cheltenham as speedily as possible, in order that her marriage, within seven months of her husband's death, might not take place under the immediate observation of his nearest relations.

CHAPTER VII.

TRANSIENT HAPPINESS. — AN ACCIDENT, LEADING TO THE DISCOVERY OF AN UNKNOWN TALENT IN MISS WILLOUGHBY, AND UNEXPECTED APPRECIATION OF IT IN COLONEL HUBERT. — SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PECULIARITIES OF THE FEMALE MIND.

It must be remembered that all these interesting particulars respecting the affairs of Mrs. Barnaby's heart were perfectly unknown both to Agness and her friends. It had, indeed, been quite as much as the posthumous affection of Mrs. Peter

for her brother could achieve, to endure with some appearance of civility the advances of his widow towards intimacy; but to pursue her with attentions when she seemed desirous of escaping them, was quite beyond her strength and courage; so, rejoicing in the effect without investigating the cause, she permitted her to keep herself within the retirement of her own drawing-room without ever seeking the reason of her so doing.

Treacherous as was this interval of calm, it was productive of most exquisite happiness to poor Agnes while it lasted. Delightful walks, abundance of books, lively conversation, and a thousand flattering marks of kindness from every body who came near her, formed a wonderful contrast to the vulgar brow-beating of her selfish aunt, and even to the best joys of her solitary closet.

But it was an interval delusive in every way. Mrs. Peters had no suspicion that her brother's widow, within seven months after his death, was on the eve of marriage with a penniless swindler.

Agnes had no suspicion that she was herself desperately in love with Colonel Hubert, or that Mr. Stephenson was desperately in love with her.

Colonel Hubert began to think, that, as he saw Agnes constantly with the Peters family, and no longer saw Mrs. Barnaby at all, the connection between them was neither so permanent nor so injurious as he had supposed, and therefore that he would act more prudently by letting matters take their course, than by any further interference; convinced that, if Frederick did choose a wife for himself, instead of permitting his friends to choose for him, he would never find a woman more likely to do him honour than Miss Willoughby. There were, moreover, some other delusions under which he laboured, both as to his own feelings and those of others; but for the present he was destined, like the rest of the party among whom he lived, to remain enveloped in a mist of error and misconception.

Poor Stephenson, more fatally deluded than all of them, guessed not that he was standing on a pinnacle of hope from whence he was soon to be dashed a thousand fathom deep into the whirlpool of despair. . . . In short, preparations for the *music party* went on very prosperously, while

“ Malignant Fate sat by and smiled ”

at all that was to happen before that music party was over.

* * * * *

Mrs. Peters confessed, after a little battling the point with her family, that it would be impossible to avoid sending a card of invitation to Mrs. Barnaby, and sent it was ; when, as she said herself, her virtue was rewarded by receiving through Agnes a message in return, expressing much regret that a previous engagement must prevent its being accepted.

On the morning of the day fixed for this party Agnes remained in her closet at least one hour beyond the time at which it was now her daily custom to set off for Rodney Place, some little preparation for her evening appearance requiring her attention. When at length she arrived there she found a note, desiring her to sit down, and wait for the return of the ladies, who, after remaining at home till beyond her usual time of coming, had all driven to Bristol to execute sundry errands of importance.

On reading this note, Agnes walked up stairs to the drawing-room, which she found uncarpetted, in preparation for the music of the evening, and a grand piano-forte standing in the middle of it. Now it so happened that, notwithstanding the constant visits of Agnes in Rodney Place, and the general love of music which reigned there, she had never been asked if she could play or sing, and had never by any chance done either. There are some houses, and very pleasant ones, too, in their way, in which music is considered by the family as a sort of property belonging of right to them, *en portage* with professors indeed, but with which no one else can interfere, — at least within their precincts, without manifest impertinence. The house of Mrs. Peters was one of these. James, who, as we have seen, was an exceedingly amiable young man, never did any thing from morning to night, if he could help it, but practise on the violoncello, and sing duets with his sister Lucy. Miss Peters was the only one who shared not in the talent or the monopoly, for Elizabeth played the harp, and Lucy sang and accompanied herself on the piano during by far the greater part of every day. Agnes was delighted by their performance ; and though she longed once more to touch the keys herself, and perhaps to hear her own sweet voice again, she had never

found courage sufficient to enable her to ask permission to do so.

When, therefore, she found herself perfectly alone, with the tempting instrument before her, and a large collection of music placed beside it, she eagerly applied her hand to try if it were open: it yielded to her touch, and in a moment her hands were running over the keys with that species of ecstasy which a young enthusiast in the science always feels after having been long deprived of the use of an instrument.

Agnes played correctly, and with great taste and feeling, but she could by no means compete with Lucy Peters as an accomplished pianiste; she had enjoyed neither equal practice nor equal instruction. But there was one branch of the "gay science" in which she excelled her far beyond the reach of comparison, for Agnes had a voice but rarely equalled in any country. Of the pre-eminence of her power she was herself profoundly ignorant, and if she preferred hearing her own glorious notes to those of any other voice which had yet reached her, she truly believed it was because there was such a very great pleasure in hearing one's self sing, — an opinion that had been considerably strengthened by her observations on Lucy.

It was with very great delight, unquestionably, that Agnes now listened to the sounds she made. The size of the room, the absence of the carpet, the excellence and the isolation of the instrument, were all advantages she had not enjoyed before, and her pleasure was almost childish in its ecstasy. She let her rich voice run, like the lark's, into wanton playfulness of ornament, and felt her own power with equal joy and surprise.

But when this first outpouring of her youthful spirit was over, she more soberly turned to the volumes beside her; and hesitating a moment between the gratification of exploring new regions of harmony with an uncertain step, and that of going through, with all the advantages of her present accessories, what had so often enchanted her without them, she chose the last; and fixing upon a volume of Handel, which had been the chief source from which the old-fashioned but classic taste of Mr. Wilmot had made her master draw her *subjects of study*, she more soberly set about indulging herself *with one of his best-loved airs*. The notes of "Angela ever

bright and fair," then swelled gloriously through the unpeopled room, and "Lord, remember David," followed. After this she "changed her hand," and the sparkling music of Comus seemed to make the air glad, as she carolled through its delicious melodies.

Amidst all this luxury of sound, it is not surprising that the knocker or the bell should give signal either of the return of the family, or the approach of some visiter, without the fair minstrel's being aware of it. This in fact occurred, and with a result that, had she been in the secret, would have converted the clear notes of her happy song into inarticulate "suspitations of forced breath."

Colonel Hubert had promised his friend Frederick, when they parted at the breakfast-table, to join him at Rodney Place, as he had often within the last few days done before, for the purpose of joining the party in their usual morning walk. But Frederick had arrived there so early, that he had handed Mrs. Peters and her daughters into their carriage when they set off for Bristol, and then turned from the door in despair of seeing Agnes for some hours.

Having sought his friend Hubert, and missed him, he betook himself to a gallop on the downs by way of beguiling the time till two o'clock, when he intended to make another attempt to meet her, by joining the luncheon party on Mrs. Peters's return. Colonel Hubert, mean while, knocked at that lady's door exactly at the moment when the happy performer in the drawing-room was giving full licence to her magnificent voice in a passage of which he had never before felt the power and majesty.

Colonel Hubert stopped short in the midst of the message he was leaving; and the butler who opened the door to him, and who by this time knew him as one of the most honoured guests of the mansion, stepped back smiling into the hall,—a sort of invitation for him to enter, which he had no inclination to refuse. He accordingly stepped in, and the door was closed behind him.

"Pray, who is it that is singing?" inquired the colonel, as soon as the strain ended.

"I think, sir, it must be Miss Willoughby, for I have le in nobody else since the ladies went," replied the man.

"Miss Willoughby!" repeated Colonel Hubert un-
consciously; "Miss Willoughby! . . . Impossible!"

"I think, sir, by the sound," rejoined the servant, "that one of the drawing-room doors must be open; and if you would please to walk up, colonel, you might hear it quite plain without disturbing her."

If Colonel Hubert had a weakness, it was his unbounded love for music, though even here he had proved his power of conquering inclination when he thought it right to do so. When quite a young man he had been tempted by this passion to give so much time to the study of the violin, as to interfere materially with all other pursuits. A friend, greatly his senior, and possessing his highest esteem, pointed out to him very strongly the probable effect of this upon his future career. The next time the beloved professor arrived to give Colonel Hubert a lesson, he made him a present of his violin, and gave up the pursuit for ever . . . but not the love for it . . . that nature had implanted beyond the power of will to eradicate.

In short, this invitation from Mrs. Peters's butler was too tempting to be resisted, and nodding his approval of it to the man, he walked softly up the stairs, and found, as that sagacious person had foreseen, that the door of the back drawing-room was open. Colonel Hubert entered very cautiously, for the folding doors between the two apartments were partly open also, but he was fortunate enough to glide unseen behind one of its large *battants*, the rising hinges of which were in such a position as to permit him, without any danger of being discovered, to see as well as hear the unsuspecting Agnes.

Poor girl! could she have been conscious of this, her agitation would have amounted to agony; and yet no imaginable combination of circumstances could have been so favourable to the first, the dearest, the most secret wish of her heart: . . . which was, that when she lost sight of him, which she must soon do,—as she well believed, for ever,—he might not think her too young, too trifling, too contemptible, ever to recall her to his memory again.

There was, perhaps, no great danger of this before; but now it could neither be hoped nor feared that Colonel Hubert should ever forget what he, during these short moments, heard and saw. There is, perhaps, no beautiful woman who sings

well, who would not appear to greater advantage, if thus furtively looked at and listened to, than when performing, conscious of the observation of all around her. But to Agnes this advantage was in the present instance great indeed, for never before had he seen her beautiful countenance in the full play of bright intelligence and unrestrained enthusiasm, . . . and never had he imagined that she could sing at all! She was lovely, radiant, inspired; and Colonel Hubert was in a fair way of forgetting equally that she was the chosen of his friend, the niece of Mrs. Barnaby, and that he was just twenty years her senior, when the house-door was assailed by the footman's authoritative rap, and the moment after the ladies' voices, as they ran up the stairs, effectually awakened him to the realities of his situation.

He now for the first time felt conscious that this situation had been obtained by means not perfectly justifiable, and that an apology was certainly called for, and must be made. He therefore retraced his steps, but with less caution, through the still open door; and meeting Mrs. Peters just as she reached the top of the stairs, said in a voice, perhaps somewhat less steady than usual,—

“Will you forgive me, Mrs. Peters, and plead for my forgiveness elsewhere, when I confess to you that I have stolen up stairs and hid myself for at least half an hour in your back drawing-room, for the purpose of hearing Miss Willoughby sing? . . . She is herself quite ignorant of this *détail*; . . . and when you pronounce to her my guilt, I hope, at the same time, you will recommend me to mercy.”

“Miss Willoughby singing!” exclaimed Mrs. Peters; “surely you must be mistaken, Colonel Hubert. . . Agnes never sang in her life.”

“Agnes singing! . . . Oh no! . . .” cried Luey; “that is quite impossible, I assure you.”

“And what says the young lady herself?” relied Colonel Hubert, as Agnes came forward to meet her friends.

But she was assailed with such a clamorous chorus of questions, that it was some time before she in the least understood what had happened. To the reiterated . . . “Have you really been singing, Agnes?” . . . “Do you really sing?” . . . “How is it possible we never found it out?” . . . and *the like*; she answered quietly enough, . . . “I sing a little,

and I have been trying to amuse myself while waiting for you." But when Mrs. Peters laughingly added, "And do you know, my dear, that Colonel Hubert has been listening to you, from the back drawing-room, all the time?" all semblance of composure vanished. She first coloured violently, and then turned deadly pale; and, totally unable to answer, sat down on the nearest chair instinctively, to prevent herself from falling, but with little or no consciousness of what she was about.

Colonel Hubert watched her with an eye which seemed bent upon reading every secret of the heart that so involuntarily betrayed its own agitation; but what he saw, or thought he saw there, seemed infectious, for he, too, lost all presence of mind; and quickly approaching her with heightened colour, and a voice trembling from irrepressible feeling, he said,—

"Have I offended you? . . . Forgive me, oh! forgive me!"

There was a world of eloquence in the look with which she met his eyes; innocent, unpractised, unconscious as it was, it raised a tumult in the noble soldier's breast which it cost many a day's hard struggle afterwards to bring to order. But nobody saw it—nobody guessed it. The whole bevy of kind-hearted ladies were filled, from the "crown to the toe," with the hope and belief that Frederick Stephenson and Agnes Willoughby were born for each other, and they explained all the agitation they now witnessed by saying,—

"Did any one ever see so shy a creature!"—"How foolish you are to be frightened about it, Agnes;" and . . . "Come, my dear child, get the better of this foolish terror; and if you can sing, let us have the pleasure of hearing you."

"That's right, mamma!" said Lucy, laughing; "make her sing one song before we go down to luncheon . . . It is not at all fair that Colonel Hubert should be the only person in the secret."

"Sing us a song at once—there's a dear girl!" said Mrs. Peters, seating herself upon a sofa.

"Indeed, indeed, ma'am, I cannot sing!" replied Agnes, clasping her hands as if begging for her life.

"Upon my word, this is a very pretty mystery," said Mary. "The gentleman declares that he has been listening to her *singing this half hour*, and the lady protests that she cannot

sing at all. Permit me, mamma, to examine the parties face to face. If I understand you rightly, Colonel Hubert, you stated positively that you heard Miss Willoughby sing. Will you give me leave to ask you in what sort of manner she sang?"

"In a manner, Miss Peters," replied Colonel Hubert, endeavouring to recover his composure, "that I have seldom or never heard equalled in any country. . . . She sings most admirably."

"Good, very good," said Mary; "a perfectly clear and decisive evidence. And now, Miss Willoughby, give me leave to question you. If I mistake not, you told us about five minutes ago that you possessed not the power of singing in any manner at all?"

"Not at this moment, Mary, certainly," replied Agnes rallying, and infinitely relieved by perceiving that the overwhelming emotion under which she had very nearly fainted had neither been understood nor even remarked by any one.

"Then will you promise," said Lucy with *tant soit peu* of new-born rivalry, "will you promise to sing for us to-night?"

"You do not mean at your concert, do you, Lucy?" replied Agnes, laughing.

"And why not?" said Lucy. "Colonel Hubert declares that you sing admirably."

"Colonel Hubert is very kind to say so," answered Agnes, while rather more than her usual delicate bloom returned to her cheeks; "but he would probably change his opinion were he to hear me sing before a large party."

"I am too hungry to battle the point now, Agnes," said Mrs. Peters, "so let us come down to luncheon; but remember, my dear, if you really can sing, if it be only some easy trifling ballad, I shall not take it well of you if you refuse, for I am sorry to say there is a terrible falling off among our performers. I find three excuses sent since I went out; and I met Miss Roberts just now, our prima donna, after Lucy, who says she is so hoarse that she doubts if she shall be able to sing a note."

This was said as the party descended the stairs, so that Agnes escaped without being obliged to answer; at which she greatly rejoiced, as refusal or acquiescence seemed alike *impossible*.

Colonel Hubert stopped at the door of the dining-room, wished the party good morning, and persisted in making his retreat, though much urged by Mrs. Peters to join their meal. But he was in no mood for it — he wanted to be alone — he wanted in solitude to question, and, if possible, to understand his own feelings; and with one short look at Agnes he left them, slipped a crown into the hand of the butler who opened the door for him, and set off for a long walk over Durdham Downs, taking, as it happened, exactly the same path as that in which he had met Agnes a fortnight before.

As soon as he was gone, another rather clamorous assault was made on Agnes upon the subject of her having so long kept her power of singing a secret from them all.

"I cannot forgive you for not having at least told me of it," said Mary.

"And what was there to tell, my dearest Mary? You that are used to such playing as that of Elizabeth and Lucy, would have had fair cause to laugh at me, had I volunteered to amuse you in their stead."

"I don't know how that may be," said Lucy; "what Colonel Hubert talked about was your singing. Do you think you can sing as well as me?"

"It is a difficult question to answer, Lucy," replied Agnes with the most ingenuous innocence; "but perhaps I might, one of these days, if I were as well instructed as you are."

"Well, my dear, that is confessing something, at any rate," said Lucy, slightly colouring. "I am sure I should be very happy to have you in a duet with me, only I suppose you have not been taught to take a second."

"Oh yes! . . . I think I could sing second," replied Agnes with great simplicity; "but I have not been much used to it, because in all our duets Miss Wilmot always took the second part."

"And who is Miss Wilmot, my dear?" said Mrs. Peters.

"The daughter of the clergyman, mamma, where Agnes was educated," replied Mary.

"Here comes Mr. Stephenson," exclaimed Mrs. Peters gaily. "Now, Agnes, you positively must go up stairs again, and let us hear what you can do. I shall be quite delighted for Mr. Stephenson to hear you sing, if you really have a voice, for I have repeatedly heard him speak with delight of his ~~daughter~~, Lady Stephenson's, singing."

"Then I am sure that is a reason for never letting him hear mine," said Agnes, who was beginning to feel very restless, and longing as ardently for the solitude of her closet, in order to take a review of all the events of the morning, as Colonel Hubert for the freedom of the Downs. But the friends around her were much too kind and much too dear for any whims or wishes of her own to interfere with what they desired; and when, upon the entrance of Frederick, they all joined in beseeching her to give them one song, she yielded, and followed meekly and obediently to the piano-forte.

She certainly did not sing now as she had done before; the fervour, the enthusiasm was passed; yet, nevertheless, the astonishment and delight of her auditors were unbounded. Praises and reproaches were blended with the thanks of her female friends, who, forgetting that they had never invited her performance, seemed to think her having so long concealed her talent a positive injury and injustice. But in the raptures of Frederick Stephenson there was no mixture of reproach; he seemed rapt in an ecstasy of admiration and love, the exact amount of which was pretty fairly appreciated by every one who listened to him except herself. A knavish speech sleeps not so surely in a foolish ear, as a passionate rhapsody in one that is indifferent. Our Agnes was by no means dull of apprehension on most occasions; but the incapacity she showed for understanding the real meaning of nineteen speeches out of every twenty addressed to her by Frederick was remarkable. It is probable, indeed, that indifference alone would hardly have sufficed to constitute a defence so effectual against all the efforts he made to render his feelings both intelligible and acceptable; pre-occupation of heart and intellect may account for it better. But whatever the cause of this insensibility, it certainly existed, and in such a degree as to render this enforced exhibition, and all the vehement praises that followed it, most exceedingly irksome. A greater proof of this could hardly be given than by her putting a stop to it at last by saying,—

"If you really wish me to sing a song to-night, my dear Mrs. Peters, you must please to let me go now, or I think I shall be so hoarse as to make it impossible."

This little stratagem answered perfectly, and at once brought her near to the solitude for which she was pining.

"Wish you to sing to-night, *petite?*" . . . said Mrs. Peters, clapping her little hands with delight . . . "I rather think I shall . . . I have had the terror of Mrs. Armstrong before my eyes for the last fortnight, and I think, Mary, that we have a novelty here that may save us from the faint prize usually accorded by her connoisseurship . . ."

"I imagine we have, mamma," replied Mary, who was in every way delighted by the discovery of this unknown talent in her favourite. "But Agnes is right; she must really sing no more now. . . . You have had no walk to-day, Agnes, have you?" kindly adding, "if you like it, I will put on my bonnet again and take a stroll with you."

Agnes blushed when she replied,— "No, I have not time to walk to-day. . . . I must go home now;" much as she might have done if, instead of intending to take a ramble with her thoughts, she had been about to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* promenade with the object of them.

"At least we will walk home with you," replied her friend; and accordingly the two eldest girls and Mr. Stephenson accompanied her to Sion Row.

Ungrateful Agnes! . . . It was with a feeling of joy that made her heart leap that she watched the departure of her kind friends, and of him too who would have shed his blood for her with gladness . . . in order that in silence and solitude she might live over again the moments she had passed with Hubert—moments which, in her estimation, outweighed in value whole years of life without him.

Dear and precious was her little closet now. There was nothing within it that ever tempted her aunt to enter; her retreat, therefore, was secure, and deeply did she enjoy the conviction that it was so. It was not Petrarch, it was not Shakespeare, no, nor Spenser's fairy-land, in which, when fancy-free, she used to roam for hours of most sweet forgetfulness, that now chained her to her solitary chair, and kept her wholly unconscious of the narrow walls that hemmed her in. But what a world of new and strange thoughts it was amidst which she soon lost herself! . . . Possibilities, conjectures, hopes, such as had never before entered her head, arose within her as, with a singular mixture of distinctness of memory and confusion of feeling, she lived again through every instant of the period during which Colonel Hubert had

been in her presence, and of that, more thrilling still as she meditated upon it, when she unconsciously had been in his. How anxiously she recalled her attitude, the careless disorder of her hair, and the unmeasured burst of enjoyment to which she had yielded herself! How every song she had sung passed in review before her! Her graces, her *roulades*, her childish trials of what she could effect, all seemed to rise in judgment against her, and her cheeks tingled with the blushes they brought. Yet in the midst of this, perhaps,

. . . . a sense of self-approving power
Mixed with her busy thought

and she felt that she was not sorry he had heard her sing.

Then came the glowing picture of the few short moments that followed the discovery the look that she had seen fixed upon her the voice that trembled as he asked to be forgiven his flushed cheek the agitation — yes, the agitation of his manner, of the stately Hubert's manner, as he approached, as he stood near, as he looked at, as he spoke to her! It was so; she knew it, she had seen it, she had felt it. . . . How strange is the constitution of the human mind! and how mutually dependant are its faculties and feelings on each other! The same girl who was so "earthly dull" as to be unable to perceive the undisguised adoration of Frederick Stephenson, was now rapt in a delirium of happiness from having read, what probably no other mortal eye could see, in the involuntary workings of Colonel Hubert's features for a few short instants, while offering an apology which he could hardly avoid making.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME FARTHER PARTICULARS RESPECTING THE STATE OF MRS. BARNABY'S HEART. — TENDER DOUBTS AND FEARS, ON THE PART OF THE MAJOR, ALL SET TO REST BY THE GENTLE KINDNESS OF THE WIDOW. — SOME ACCOUNT OF MRS. PETERS'S CONCERT, AND OF THE TERRIBLE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED IT.

WE have left the Widow Barnaby too long, and must hasten back to her. There was altogether a strange mixture of worldly wisdom and of female folly in her character, for first one and then the other preponderated, as circumstances oc-

curred. Had a man, richer than she believed the fascinating major to be, proposed to her even at the very tenderest time of his courtship, there is no doubt in the world but she would have accepted him; but when all her pecuniary anxieties were lulled into a happy doze by the pleasing statements of Messrs. William and Maintry, her loving-making propensities awoke; she was again the Martha Compton of Silverton; and became so exceedingly attached to the major's society, that neither Mrs. Peters's concert, nor any other engagement in which he did not share, could have compensated for one of those delightful *tête-à-tête* evenings during which Agnes enjoyed the society of her friends.

When Major Allen saw the invitation card from Rodney Place lying on the table, he said,—

“Do you intend to go, dearest?”

“Have you a card, major?” was the reply; and when the rejoinder produced a negative, she added,—“Then most assuredly I shall not go;” a degree of fidelity that was very satisfactory to the major, who began to discover that his newness in the society of Clifton was wearing off, and that he was eyed askance whenever he ventured to appear where gentlemen assembled.

A thousand fond follies, of course, diversified these frequent *tête-à-têtes*; and upon one occasion the major, in a sudden burst of jealous tenderness, declared, that, notwithstanding the many proofs of affection she had granted him, there was one without which he could not be satisfied, as his dreams perpetually tormented him with visions of rivals who succeeded in snatching her from him.

“Oh! major, what folly!” exclaimed the lady. “Have you not yet learned to read my heart? But what is there foolish as you are what is there that I could refuse to you that it was not inconsistent with my honour to grant?”

“Your honour! Beautiful Juno! know you not that your honour is dearer to me than my own? What I would ask, my beloved Martha, can attach no disgrace to you, but, in fact, I shall not know a moment's ease till you have given me a promise of marriage. I know, my love, that you have relations here who will leave no stone unturned to prevent our union, and the idea that they may succeed

distracts me! . . . Will you forgive this weakness, and grant what I implore?"

"You know I will, foolish man! . . . but I will have your promise in return, or you will think my love less fervent than your own," returned the widow playfully.

To this the major made no objection; and so, "in merry sport," these promises were signed and exchanged amidst many lover-like jestings on their own folly.

This happened just three days before the eventful concert; and in the interval Major Allen received a letter from his friend Maintry, who was still at Bath, requesting him to join him there in order to give him the advantage of his valuable advice on a matter of great importance. It was, of course, with extreme reluctance that he tore himself away; but it was a sacrifice demanded by friendship, and he would make it, as he told the widow, on condition that she would rescind her refusal to Mrs. Peters, and pass the evening of his absence at her house. She agreed to this, and he left her only in time to enable her to dress for the party.

The being accompanied by her aunt was a considerable drawback to any pleasure Agnes had anticipated from the evening, and the stroke came upon her by surprise, for Mrs. Barnaby did not deem it necessary to stand on such ceremony with her sister as to ask leave to come after having been once invited.

Mrs. Peters looked vexed and disconcerted when she entered; but, perceiving the anxiety with which Agnes was watching to see how she bore it, she recalled her smiles, placed her prodigiously fine sister-in-law on a sofa with two other dowagers, desired Mr. Peters to go and talk to her, and then seizing upon Agnes, led her among the party of amateurs who were indulging in gossip and tea at a snug table in the second drawing-room. She was immediately introduced as a young friend who would prove a great acquisition, and two or three songs in her own old-fashioned style were assigned, pretty nearly without waiting for her consent, to her performance; but with an observation from Mrs. Peters that she could not refuse, because they were the very songs she had sung when Mr. Stephenson was there in the morning.

All this was said and done in a bustle and a hurry, and

Agnes carried off captive to the region where the business of the evening was already beginning with the tuning of instruments and the arrangement of desks, before she well knew what she intended to do or say. She would have felt the embarrassment more had her mind been fully present to the scene; but it was not. She knew that Mr. Stephenson and his friend were expected, and no spot of earth had much interest for her at that moment except the doorway.

Her suspense lasted not long, however, for they soon entered together, and then her heart bounded, the colour varied on her cheek, and her whole frame trembled. Mr. Stephenson was by her side in a moment; but she was conscious of this only sufficiently to make her feel a pang because Colonel Hubert had not followed him. Far from approaching her, indeed, he seemed to place himself studiously at a distance, and instantly a deep gloom appeared in the eyes of Agnes to have fallen upon every object. . . . The lights were dim, every instrument out of tune, and the civilities of Mr. Stephenson so extremely troublesome, that she thought, if they continued, she must certainly leave the room.

The overture began, and she was desired to sit down in the place assigned her; but this, as she found, left her open on one side to the pertinacious whisperings of Mr. Stephenson, and with a movement of irritation quite new to her, she got up again, with her cheeks burning, to ask for a place in the very middle of a row of ladies who could not comply with her request without real difficulty.

As soon as she had reached her new station she raised her eyes, and looked towards the spot where she had seen Colonel Hubert place himself; there he was still, and moreover his eyes were evidently fixed upon her.

"Why will he not speak to me?" mentally exclaimed poor Agnes; . . . "or why does he so look at me?"

It would not have been difficult for Colonel Hubert to have given an answer. While they were taking coffee together half an hour before they set off, Frederick Stephenson told his friend that his fate would that night be decided, for he had made up his mind to propose to Miss Willoughby.

Colonel Hubert started. . . . "Of course, Frederick, you do not decide upon this without being pretty certain what the answer will be," was the reply of Colonel Hubert.

"You know the definition Silvius gives of love," returned Frederick. "It is to be all made of faith and service . . . and so am I for Agnes. . . Wherefore, as my service is, and shall be perfect, so also shall be my faith, nor will I ever submit myself to the misery of doubting. . . Either she is mine at once, or I fly where I can never see her more."

After this, Colonel Hubert very naturally preferred looking on from a distance, to making any approach that might disturb the declared purpose of his friend.

"By-standers see most," . . . is an old proverb, and all such speak truly. Frederick, notwithstanding his "perfect service," was not by many a degree so near discovering the true state of Miss Willoughby's feelings as his friend: not, indeed, that Colonel Hubert discovered any thing relating to himself, but he saw weariness and distaste in the movement of Agnes's head, and the mournful expression of her face, even before the decisive manœuvre by which she escaped from him, who was only waiting for an opportunity of confessing himself "to be all made of adoration, duty, and observance."

An indescribable sensation of pleasure tingled through the veins of Colonel Hubert as he observed this, but the next moment his heart reproached him with a bitter pang. "Am I then a traitor to him who has so frankly trusted me?" thought he. "No, by Heaven! . . . Poor Frederick! . . . Angel as she is, he well deserves her, for from the very first he has thought of her, and her only; . . . while I . . . the study of her aunt's absurdities I deemed the more attractive speculation of the two . . . Agnes, you are avenged!"

The good-humoured Frederick, mean time, though foiled in his hope of engrossing her, quickly found consolation in listening to Miss Peters, who confided to him all her doubts and fears respecting the possibility of her friend's finding courage to sing before so large an audience.

"For God's sake, do not plague her about it," said he. "Though, to be sure, such a voice as hers would be enough to embellish any concert in the world."

"It is only on mamma's account," replied Mary, "that I am anxious for it; . . . she has been so disappointed about Miss Roberts! . . . I wish, after Lucy's next duet with James, while Elizabeth is accompanying the violoncello, that you

would contrive to get near her, where she is trying to keep out of the way, poor thing! . . . and tell her that my mother wishes to speak to her."

Frederick readily undertook the commission, not ill pleased to be thus confirmed in his belief that she had not run away from him, but for some other reason which he had not before understood. Miss Peters was far from imagining what an effectual means she had hit upon for making her friend Agnes take a place among the performers. She had continued to sit during the long duet, triumphing in the clever management that had placed her out of the way of every body, and perfectly aware . . . though she by no means appeared to watch him steadily . . . that Colonel Hubert did not feel at all more gay or happy than herself. But lo! just at the moment indicated by Mary, the smiling, bowing, handsome Frederick Stephenson contrived civilly and silently to make his way between crowded rows of full-dressed ladies to the place where Agnes fancied herself in such perfect security. He delivered his message, but not without endeavouring to make her understand how superlatively happy the commission had made him.

This was too much. . . . To sit within the same room that held Colonel Hubert, without his taking the slightest notice of her, and that, too, after all the sweet delusive visions of the morning, was quite dreadful enough, without having to find answers for words she did not hear, and dress her face in smiles, when she was so very much disposed to weep. "I will sing every song they will let me," thought she. "Ill or well, it matters not now. . . . I will bear any thing but being talked to!"

Giving the eager messenger nothing but a silent nod in return for all his trouble, Agnes again rose, and made her way to Mrs. Peters.

It chanced that Mary, Lucy, and one or two other ladies were in consultation with her at a part of the room exactly within sight of Mrs. Barnaby, who, having found her neighbours civilly disposed to answer all her questions, had thus far remained tolerably contented and quiet. But the scene she now witnessed aroused her equally to jealousy and astonishment. Mrs. Peters— who, from the moment she had deposited her on the sofa, had never bestowed a single word upon her, but, on the contrary, kept very carefully out of her way

—had hitherto been supposed by her self-satisfied sister-in-law to be too much occupied in arranging the progress of the musical performance to have any time left to bestow upon her relations; yet now she saw her in the centre of the room, devoting her whole attention to Agnes, evidently presenting her to one or two of the most elegant-looking among her company, and finally taking her by the hand, as if she had been the most important personage present, and leading her with smiles, and an air of the most flattering affection, to the piano-forte.

“Who is that beautiful girl, ma’am?” said one of Mrs. Barnaby’s talkative neighbours, thinking, perhaps, that she had a right, in her turn, to question a person who had so freely questioned her.

“What girl, ma’am?” returned Mrs. Barnaby; for use so lessens marvel, that she had become almost unconscious of the uncommon loveliness of her niece; or, at any rate, was too constantly occupied by other concerns to pay much attention to it.

“That young lady in black crape, whom Mrs. Peters has just led to the instrument. . . . Upon my word, I think she is the most beautiful person I ever saw!”

“Oh! . . . that’s my niece, ma’am; . . . and I’m sure I don’t know what nonsense my sister Peters has got in her head about her . . . I hope she is not going to pretend to play without asking my leave. It is time I should look after her.” And so saying the indignant Mrs. Barnaby arose, determined upon sharing the notice at least, if not the favour, bestowed upon her dependant kinswoman. But she was immediately compelled to reseal herself by the universal “Hush!” . . . that buzzed around her; for at that moment the superb voice of Agnes burst upon the room, and “startled the dull ear” of the least attentive listener in it.

The effect was so wholly unlooked-for, and so great, that the demonstration of it might naturally have been expected to overpower so young a performer; Miss Peters, therefore, the moment the song was over, hastened to her friend, expecting to find her agitated, trembling, and in want of an arm to support her; but instead of this she found Agnes perfectly tranquil . . . apparently unconscious of having produced any sensation at all in the company at large, and in

fact looking, for the first time since she entered the room, happy and at her ease.

The cause of this could only be found where Miss Peters never thought of looking for it,—namely, in the position and countenance of Colonel Hubert. He had not, indeed, yet spoken much to her; but enough, at least, to convince her that he was not more indifferent than in the morning, and, in short, enough to raise her from the miserable state of dejection and annoyance which made her fly with such irritated feelings from the attentions of Frederick, to such a state of joyous hopefulness as made her almost giddily unmindful of every human being around her, save one.

Though Agnes had restlessly left the place whence she had first seen Colonel Hubert ensconce himself in a corner, apparently as far from her as possible, she chose another equally convenient for tormenting herself by watching him, and for perceiving also that nothing, save his own will and pleasure, detained him from her. From this, as we have seen, she was again driven by poor Frederick; and forgetting her shyness and all other minor evils in the misery of being talked to when her heart was breaking, she determined upon singing, solely to get out of his way.

Her false courage, however, faded fast as she approached the instrument. She remembered, with a keenness amounting almost to agony, those songs of the morning that she had since been rehearsing in spirit, in the dear belief that they had charmed away his stately reserve for ever; and she was desperately meditating the best mode of making a precipitate retreat, when, on reaching the spot kept sacred to the performers and their music-desks, she perceived Colonel Hubert in the midst of them, who immediately placed himself at her side, (where, according to rule, he had no business to be,) and asked her in a whisper, if she meant to accompany herself.

The revulsion of feeling produced by this most unexpected address was violent indeed. Her whole being seemed changed in a moment. Her heart beat, her eyes sparkled with recovered happiness, and she literally remembered nothing but that she was going to sing to him again. In answer to his question, she said with a smile that made him very nearly as forgetful of all around as herself, “Do you think I had better do it? Or shall I ask Elizabeth?”

"No, no; ask no one," he replied.

"And what shall I sing?" again whispered Agnes.

"The last song you sang this morning," was the reply.

Orpheus was never inspired by a more powerful feeling than that which now animated the renovated spirit of Agnes, and she performed as she never had performed before.

The result was a burst of applause, that ought, *selon les regles*, to have been overpowering to her feelings; yet there she stood, blushing a little certainly, but looking as light-hearted and as happy as the Peri when re-admitted into Paradise. Just at this moment, and exactly as Colonel Hubert was offering his arm to lead her back again to a place among the company, Mrs. Barnaby, feathered, rouged, ringleted, and desperately determined to share the honours of the hour, made her way, proud in the consciousness of attracting an hundred eyes, up to the conspicuous place where Agnes stood. She had already taken Colonel Hubert's arm, and for an instant he seemed disposed to attempt leading her off in the contrary direction; but if he really meditated so bold a measure, he was completely foiled, for Mrs. Barnaby, laying her hand on his in a very friendly way, exclaimed in her most fascinating style of vivacity, —

"No, no, Colonel you are vastly obliging; but I must take care of my own niece, if you please! She sings just like her poor mother, my dear Mary," she added, changing her tone to a sentimental whine. . . . "I assure you it is almost too much for my feelings;" and as she said this she drew the unhappy Agnes away, having thrown her arm round her waist, while she kissed her affectedly on the forehead.

Colonel Hubert hovered about her for a few minutes; but whatever might be the fascinations that attracted him, they were apparently not strong enough to resist another personal attack from Mrs. Barnaby.

"What a crowd!" she exclaimed, suddenly turning towards him. "Do, Colonel, give me your arm, and we will go and eat some ice in the other room;" upon which he suddenly retreated among the throng, and in two minutes had left the house. It is true, that at the moment the widow so audaciously asked for his arm, Frederick Stephenson was just *presenting his to Agnes*, which it is possible might have added

impulse to the velocity of this sudden exit; but whichever was the primary feeling, both together were more than he could bear; and accordingly, like many other conquered heroes, he sought safety in flight.

Of what happened in that room during the rest of the evening, poor Agnes could have given no account; to sing again she assured her friends was quite beyond her power, and she looked so very pale and so very miserable as she said this, that they believed she had really over-exerted herself; and, delighted by the brilliant success of her one song, permitted her to remain unmolested by further solicitations.

Frederick Stephenson also doubted not that the unusual effort she had made before so large a party was one cause of her evident dejection, though he could not but feel that the appearance and manner of her aunt were likely enough to increase this; but, at all events, it was no time to breathe into her ear the tale of love he had prepared for it; so, after asking Miss Peters if he should be likely to find her friend at Rodney Place on the following morning, and receiving from her a cordial. . . . "Oh! yes, certainly," he also took his leave, more in love than ever; and though mortified by the disappointment this long-expected evening had brought him, as sanguine as ever in his hopes for the morrow.

Mrs. Barnaby was one of the last guests that departed; and, next to the pleasure of being made love to, the gratification of finding herself in a large party, with the power of calling the giver of it her "dear sister," ranked highest in her present estimation. Agnes was anxiously waiting for her signal to depart; but no sooner was she shut up in the *fy* with her than she heartily wished herself back again, for a torrent of scolding was poured forth upon her as unexpected as it was painful.

"And it is thus, ungrateful viper as you are, that you reward my kindness! . . . Never have you deigned to tell me that you could sing . . . no, you wicked, wicked creature, you leave me to find it out by accident; while your new friends, or rather new strangers, are made your confidants, — while I am to sit by and look like a fool, because I never heard of it before! . . ."

"It was only because there was a piano-forte there, ~~that~~. . . I cannot sing without one."

"Ungrateful wretch! . . . reproaching me with not spending my last shilling in buying piano-fortes! But I will tell you, miss, what your fine singing shall end in. . . You shall go upon the stage. . . mark my words. . . you shall go upon the stage, Miss Willoughby, and sing for your bread. No husband of mine shall ever be taxed to maintain such a mean-spirited, ungrateful, conceited upstart as you are!"

Agnes attempted no farther explanation; and the silent tears these revilings drew, were too well in accordance with her worn-out spirits and sinking heart to be very painful. She only longed for her closet, and the unbroken stillness of night, that she might shed them without fear of interruption. But this was destined to be a night of disappointments, for even this melancholy enjoyment was denied her.

On arriving at their lodgings, the door was opened by the servant of the house; and when Mrs. Barnaby imperiously demanded, "Where is my maid? . . . where is Jerningham?" she was told that Jerningham had gone out, and was not yet returned.

Now Jerningham was an especial favourite with her mistress, being a gossip and a sycophant of the first order; and the delinquency of not being come home at very nearly one o'clock in the morning, elicited no expression of anger, but a good deal of alarm.

"Dear me!" . . . what can have become of her? . . . Poor dear girl, I fear she must have met with some accident! . . . What o'clock was it when she went out?" . . . Such questionings lasted till the stairs were mounted, and the lady had entered her bed-room.

But no sooner did she reach the commode and place her candle upon it, than she uttered a tremendous scream, followed by exclamations which speedily explained to Agnes and the servant the misfortune that had befallen her. "I am robbed — I am ruined! . . . Look here! . . . look here! . . . my box broken open, and every farthing of money gone. . . All my forks too! . . . all my spoons, and my cream-jug, and my mustard-pot! . . . I am ruined — I am robbed! . . . But you shall be answerable, — the mistress of the house shall be answerable. . . You must have let the thieves in. . . you must, for the house-door was not broke open."

The girl of the house looked exceedingly terrified, and asked if she had not better call up her mistress.

“ To be sure you had, you fool ! Do you think I am going to sleep in a room where thieves have been suffered to enter while I was out ? How do I know but they may be lurking about still, waiting to murder me ? ”

The worthy widow to whom the house belonged speedily joined the group in nightcap and bedgown, and listened half awake to Mrs. Barnaby's clamorous account of her misfortune.

As soon as she began to understand the statement, which was a good deal encumbered by lamentations and threats, the quiet little old woman, without appearing to take the least offence at the repeated assertion that she must have let the thieves in herself, turned to her servant and said, —

“ Is the lady's maid come in, Sally ? ”

“ No, ma'am,” said Sally ; “ she has never come back since she went out with the gentleman's servant as comed to fetch her.”

“ Then you may depend upon it, ma'am, that 'tis your maid as have robbed you,” said the landlady.

“ My maid ! What ! Jerningham ? Impossible ! She is the best girl in the world — an innocent creature that I had away from school 'Tis downright impossible, and I never will believe it.”

“ Well, ma'am,” said the widow, “ let it be who it will, it wo'n't be possible to catch 'em to-night ; and I would advise you to go to bed, for the poor young lady looks pale and frightened ; and to-morrow morning, ma'am, I would recommend your asking Mr. Peters what is best to be done.”

“ And how am I to be sure that there are no thieves in the house now ? ” cried Mrs. Barnaby. . . . “ Open the door of your closet, Agnes, and look under the beds ; and you, Mrs. Crocker, you must go into the drawing-room, and down stairs and up stairs, and every where, before I lay my poor dear head upon my pillow. . . . I don't choose to have my throat cut, I promise you. — Good heavens ! What will Major Allen say ? ”

“ I don't think, ma'am, that we should any of us like to have our throats cut,” replied Mrs. Crocker ; “ and luckily there is no great likelihood of it, I fancy Good night, ladies.”

And without waiting for any further discussion, the sleepy *mistress of the mansion* crept back to bed her hand-

maiden followed her example, and Agnes was left alone to receive upon her devoted head the torrent of lamentations by which the bereaved Mrs. Barnaby gave vent to her sorrows during great part of the night.

On the following morning the widow took Mrs. Crocker's very reasonable advice, and repaired to Rodney Place in time to find Mr. Peters before he set off on his daily walk to Bristol. Agnes, pale, fatigued, and heavy-hearted, accompanied her; and so striking was the change in her appearance from what it had been the day before, that those of the party round the breakfast-table, who best loved her, were much more pleased than pained, when they learned that the cause of her bad night and consequent ill looks was her aunt's having been robbed of nearly a hundred pounds and a few articles of plate.

They were too judicious, however, to mention their satisfaction, and the sorrows of the widow received from all the party a very suitable measure of condolence. Mr. Peters, indeed, did much more than condole with her, for he cordially offered his assistance; and it was soon settled, by his advice, that Mrs. Barnaby should immediately accompany him to the mayor, and afterwards proceed according to the instructions of a lawyer, to whom he immediately despatched a note, requesting that he would meet them forthwith before the magistrate. The carriage was then ordered: Agnes, by the advice of all parties, was left at Rodney Place; and Mrs. Barnaby, somewhat comforted, but still in great tribulation, set off in her dear sister's *coach* (her best consolation) to testify before the mayor of Bristol, not only that she had been robbed, but that there certainly was some reason to suppose her maid Jerningham the thief.

Mr. Peters found his lawyer ready to receive them, who, after hearing the lady's statement, obtained a warrant for the apprehension of Elizabeth Jacks and of William — (surname unknown), groom or valet, or both, to Major Allen, lodging at Gloucester Row, Clifton. The widow had very considerable scruples concerning the implication of this latter individual; but having allowed that she thought he must be the "gentleman's servant" spoken of by Mrs. Crocker's maid as having accompanied Jerningham when she left the house, she was assured that it would be necessary to include him; and she finally consented, on its being made manifest to her

that, if he proved innocent, there would be no difficulty whatever in obtaining his release. Mrs. Barnaby was then requested accurately to describe the persons of her maid and her supposed companion, which she did very distinctly, and with the less difficulty, because the persons of both were remarkable.

"There wasn't another man likely to be in her company, was there, ma'am?" said a constable who was in attendance in the office.

"No," replied Mrs. Barnaby confidently, "I don't know any one at all likely to be with her. I am almost sure that she had not any other acquaintance."

"But the man might," observed another official.

"That's true," rejoined the first, "and therefore I strongly suspect that I saw the girl and the man too enter a house on the quay just fit for such sort of company; . . . but there was another fellow along with them."

"Then we will charge you with the warrant, Miles," said the magistrate. "If you can succeed in taking them into custody at once, it is highly probable that you may be able to recover the property."

This hint rendered the widow extremely urgent that no time should be lost; and in case the constable should succeed in finding them at the place he had named, she consented to remain in a room attached to the office, that no time might be lost in identifying the parties.

"There will be no harm, I suppose, in taking the other fellow on suspicion, if I find them still together?" said the constable; adding, "I rather think I know something of that t'other chap already." He received authority to do this, and then departed, leaving Mrs. Barnaby, her faithful squire, Mr. Peters, and the lawyer, seated on three stools in a dismal sort of apartment within the office, the lady, at least, being in a state of very nervous expectation. This position was not a pleasant one; but fortunately it did not last long, for in considerably less than an hour they were requested to return into the office, the three prisoners being arrived.

Mr. Peters gave the lady his arm, and they entered by a door exactly facing the spot on which stood the three persons first brought in, with the constable and two attendant officers behind them. The group, as expected, consisted of two men and a girl, which latter was indeed the tall and slender Betty

Jacks, and no other; the man at her left hand was William, the major's civil groom, and he at her right was no, it was impossible, . . . yet she could not mistake . . . it must be, and, in fact, it was that pattern of faithful friendship, Captain Maintry!

Mrs. Barnaby's agitation was now, beyond all suspicion of affectation, very considerable, and his worship obligingly ordered a glass of water and a chair, which having been procured and profited by, he asked her if she knew the prisoners.

"Yes!" she answered with a long-drawn sigh.

"Can you point them out by name?"

"The girl is my maid Jer . . . Betty Jacks . . . that man is William, Major Allen's groom . . . and that other . . ."

"You had better stop there," interrupted the self-styled captain, "or you may chance to say more than you know."

"You had better be silent, I promise you," said the magistrate. "Pray, ma'am, do you know that person? . . . Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes, I have seen him before," replied Mrs. Barnaby, who was pale in spite of her rouge; for the recollection of all the affectionate intimacy she had witnessed between this man and her affianced major turned her very sick, and it was quite as much as she could do to articulate.

"I should be sorry, ma'am, to trouble you with any unnecessary questions," said the magistrate; "but I must beg you to tell me, if you please, where it is you have seen him, and what he is called?"

"I saw him in the Mall at Clifton, sir," . . . replied Mrs. Barnaby.

"And many an honest man besides me may have been seen in the Mall at Clifton," said the *soi-disant* Captain Maintry laughing.

"And you have never seen him any where else, ma'am?"

"No, sir, never."

"Pray, was he then in company with that groom?"

"No," . . . replied the widow faltering.

Maintry laughed again.

"You cannot then swear that you suspect him of having robbed you?"—"No, sir."

Here the constable whispered something in the ear of the magistrate, who nodded, and then resumed his examination.

"Did you hear this man's name mentioned, madam, when you saw him in the Mall?" — "Yes, sir, I did."

"That has nothing to do with the present business," interrupted Maintry, "and therefore you have no right to ask it."

"I suspect that you have called yourself in this city by more names than one," replied the magistrate; "and I have a right to discover this if I can. . . . By what name did you hear him called when you saw him at Clifton, ma'am?"

"I heard him called Captain Maintry."

"Captain, indeed! . . . These fellows are all captains and majors, I think," said the magistrate, making a memorandum of the name. Mrs. Barnaby's heart sunk within her. She remembered the promise of marriage, and that so acutely as almost to make her forget the business that brought her there.

The magistrate and the lawyer, however, were less oblivious, and proceeded in the usual manner to discover whether there were sufficient grounds of suspicion against any of the parties to justify committal. The very first question addressed to Betty Jacks settled the business, for she began crying and sobbing at a piteous rate, and said, "If mistress will forgive me, I'll tell her all about it, and a great deal more too; and 'twasn't my fault, nor William's neither, half so much as Joe Purdham's, for he set us on;" and she indicated Joe Purdham with a finger which, as her lengthy arm reached within an inch of his nose, could not be mistaken as to the person to whom it intended to act as index. But had this been insufficient, the search instituted on the persons of the trio would have supplied all the proof wanted. Very nearly all the money was discovered within the lining of Purdham's hat; the pockets of Betty were heavy with forks and spoons, and the cream-jug and mustard-pot, carelessly enveloped each in a pocket-handkerchief, were lodged upon the person of William.

In a word, the parties were satisfactorily identified and committed to prison; the property of Mrs. Barnaby was in a fair way of being restored, and her very disagreeable business at Bristol done and over, leaving nothing but a ride back in her sister's coach to be accomplished.

Mr. Peters offered his arm to lead her out, and with a dash of honest triumph at having so ably managed matters, said, "Well, madam . . . I hope you are pleased with the termination of this business?"

What a question for Mrs. Barnaby to answer! . . . Pleased! . . . Was she pleased? . . . Pleased at having every reason in the world to believe that she had given a promise of marriage to the friend and associate of a common thief! . . . But the spirit of the widow did not forsake her; and, after one little hysterical gasp, she replied by uttering a thousand thanks, and a million assurances that nothing could possibly be more satisfactory.

She was not, however, quite in a condition to meet the questionings which would probably await her at Rodney Place; and as Mr. Peters did not return in the carriage, she ordered the man to set her down at Sion Row. She could not refuse to Mrs. Crocker the satisfaction of knowing that Jerningham was the thief, that Jerningham was committed to prison, and that she was bound over to prosecute; but it was all uttered as briefly as possible, and then she shut herself in her drawing-room to take counsel with herself as to what could be done to get her out of this terrible scrape without confessing either to Mr. Peters or any one else that she had ever got into it.

For the remainder of the day she might easily plead illness and fatigue to excuse her seeing any body; and as it was not till the day following that she expected the return of the major, she had still some hours to meditate upon the ways and means of extricating herself.

Towards night she became more tranquil, for she had made up her mind what to do. . . . She would meet him as fondly as ever, and then so play her game as to oblige him to let her look at the promise she had given. "Once within reach of my hand," thought she, "the danger will be over." This scheme so effectually cheered her spirits, that when Agnes returned home in the evening she had no reason whatever to suspect that her aunt had any thing particularly disagreeable upon her mind, . . . for she only called her a fool twice, and threatened to send her upon the stage three times.

CHAPTER IX.

MAJOR ALLEN PAYS A VISIT AT BATH PRODUCTIVE OF IMPORTANT RESULTS. — SYMPATHY BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE WIDOW BARNABY. — EXCHANGE IS NO ROBBERY. — VALEDICTORY COMPLIMENTS.

THE adventures of Major Allen have no connection with the narrative, excepting as far as the widow Barnaby is concerned, and therefore with his business at Bath, or any thing he did there, we have nothing to do beyond recording about ten minutes' conversation which he chanced to have with one individual of a party with whom he passed the evening after his arrival.

Among the many men of various ages who were accustomed to meet together wherever those who live by their wits were likely to prosper, there was on this occasion one young man who had but recently evinced the bad ambition of belonging to the set. Major Allen had never seen him before; but hearing him named as a famous fine fellow who was likely to do them honour, he scrupled not to converse with perfect freedom before him. The most interesting thing he had to record was the party last met, was the history of his engagement with the widow Barnaby, whom he very complacently described as extremely handsome, passionately in love with him, and possessed of a noble fortune both in money and land.

The Nestor of the party asked him with very friendly anxiety if he had been careful to ascertain what the property really was, as it was no uncommon thing for handsome widows to appear richer than they were.

"Thank you for nothing, most sage conjuror," replied the gay major; "age has not thinned my flowing hair; but I'm not such a greenhorn neither as to walk blindfold. In the first place, the lady is sister-in-law to old Peters, one of the wealthiest of turtle-eaters, and it was from one of his daughters that I learned the real state of her affairs,—an authority that may be the better depended on, because, though they receive her as a sister, and all that, it is quite evident that they are by no means very fond of her. . . . In fact, they are rather a stiff-backed generation, whereas my widow is as gay as a lark."

"Is she a Bristol woman?" inquired one of the party.

"No, she is from Devonshire," was the reply. "The name of her place is 'Silverton Park.'"

"Silverton in Devonshire," said the young stranger. "May I ask the lady's name, sir?"

"Her name is Barnaby," replied Major Allen briskly; "do you happen to know any thing about her?"

"The widow Barnaby of Silverton?" . . . Oh! to be sure I do, and a fine woman she is too,—no doubt of it. She is the widow of our apothecary."

"The widow of an apothecary? . . . No such thing, sir; you mistake altogether," replied the major. "Do you happen to know such a place as Silverton Park?"

"I never heard of such a park, sir; but I know Silverton well enough," said the young man, "and I know her house, or what was her house, as well as I know my own father's, which is at no great distance from it neither. And I know the shop and the bow-window belonging to it, and a very pretty decent dwelling-house it is."

Major Allen grew fidgety; he wanted to hear more, but did not approve the publicity of the conversation, and contrived at the moment to put a stop to it, but contrived also to make an appointment with his new acquaintance to breakfast together on the following morning; and before their allowance of tea and toast was despatched, Major Allen was not only fully disenchanted, respecting Silverton Park, and the four beautiful greys, but quite *au fait* of the reputation for running up bills which his charmer had enjoyed previous to her marriage with the worthy apothecary.

It was this latter portion of the discourse which completed the extinction of the major's passion, and this so entirely, that he permitted himself not to inquire, as he easily might have done, into the actual state of the widow's finances; but, feeling himself on the edge of a very frightful precipice, he ran off in the contrary direction too fast to see if there were any safe mode of descending without a tumble. It may indeed be doubted whether the snug little property actually in possession of his Juno would have been sufficient for his honourable ambition, even had he been as sure of her having and holding it, as she was herself; for, to say the truth, he rated his own price in the matrimonial market rather highly,—had great

faith in the power of his height and fashionable *tourneys*, and confidence unbounded in his large eyes and *collier Grec*. It is true, indeed, that he had failed more than once, and that too "when the fair cause of all his pain" had given him great reason to believe that she admired him much; nevertheless, his self-approval was in no degree lessened thereby, nor was it likely to be, so long as he could oil and trim his redundant whiskers without discovering a grey hair in them.

In short, what with his well-sustained value for himself, and his much depreciated value for the widow, he left Bath boiling with rage at the deception practised upon him, and arrived at Clifton determined to trust to his skill for obtaining a peaceable restitution of the promise of marriage, without driving his Juno to any measures that might draw upon them the observation of the public, a tribunal before which he was by no means desirous of appearing.

The state of Mrs. Barnaby's mind respecting this same promise of marriage has already been described, wherefore it may be perceived that when Major Allen made his next morning visit at Sion Row, a much greater degree of sympathy existed between himself and the widow than either imagined. It was in the tactics of both, however, to meet without any appearance of diminished tenderness; and when he entered with the smile that had so often gladdened her fond heart, she stretched out a hand to welcome him with such softness of aspect, as made the deluded gentleman tremble to think how difficult a task lay before him.

Neither was Mrs. Barnaby's heart at all more at ease. Who could doubt the sincerity of the ardent pressure with which that hand was held? . . . Who could have thought that while gazing upon her in silence that seemed to indicate feelings too strong for words, he was occupied solely in meditating how best he could get rid of her for ever?

The conversation was precluded by a pretty, well-sustained passage of affectionate inquiries concerning the period of absence, and then the major ejaculated. . . . "Yes, my sweet friend! . . . I have been well in health, . . . but it is inconceivable what fancies a man truly in love finds to torment himself!" . . . Whilst the widow mentally answered him, . . . "Perhaps you were afraid I might see your friend Maintry stuck up in the pillory, or peeping at me through the

county prison windows ;" . . . but aloud she only said, with a smile a little forced, . . . "What fancies, major?"

"I am almost afraid to tell you," he replied ; "you will think me so weak, so capricious!"

This word *capricious* sounded pleasantly to the widow's ears . . . it seemed to hint at some change—some infidelity that might make her task an easier one than she expected, and assuming an air of gaiety, she said,—

"Nay . . . if such be the case, speak out without a shadow of reserve, Major, Allen ; for I assure you there is nothing in the world I admire so much as sincerity."

"Sincerity!" muttered the half entrapped fortune hunter aside. . . . "Confound her sincerity!" . . . and then replied aloud,— "Will you promise, dear friend, to forgive me if I confess to you a fond folly?"

Mrs. Barnaby quaked all over ; she felt as if fresh grappling-irons had been thrown over her, and that escape was impossible. "Nay, really," said she, after a moment's reflection ; "I think fond follies are too young a joke for us, major ; they may do very well for Agnes, perhaps . . . but I think you and I ought to know better by this time. . . . If I can but make him quarrel with me," thought she, . . . "that would be better still!"

"If I can but once more coax her to let me have my way," thought he, . . . "the business would be over in a moment!"

"Beauty like yours is of no age!" he exclaimed ; "it is immortal as the passion it inspires, and when joined with such a heart and temper as you possess becomes . . ."

"I do assure you, major," said the widow, interrupting him rather sharply, . . . "you will do wrong if you reckon much upon my temper . . . it never was particularly good, and I can't say I think it grows better."

"Oh! say not so, for this very hour I am going to put it to the test . . . I want you to . . ."

"Pray, major, do not ask me to do any thing particularly obliging ; for, to say the truth, I am in no humour for it. . . . It has occurred to me more than once, Major Allen, since you set off so suddenly, that it is likely enough there may be another lady in the case, and that the promise you got out of me was perhaps for no other purpose in the world but to make fun of me by showing it to her."

"Hell and furies!" growled the major inwardly, "she will stick to me like a leech!"

"Oh! dream not of such villany!" he exclaimed; "it was concerning that dear promise that I wished to speak to you, my sweet Martha. . . . Methinks that promise. . . ."

"I tell you what, Major Allen," cried the widow vehemently, "if you don't let me see that promise this very moment, nothing on earth shall persuade me that you have not given it in jest to some other woman."

"Good Heaven!" . . . he replied; "what a moment have you chosen for the expression of this cruel suspicion! I was on the very verge of telling you that I deemed such a promise unworthy a love so pure — so perfect as ours; and therefore, if you would indulge my fond desire, you would let each of us receive our promise back again."

The major was really and truly in a state of the most violent perturbation as he uttered these words, fearing that the fond and jealous widow might suspect the truth, and hold his pledge with a tenacity beyond his power to conquer. He had, however, no sooner spoken, than a smile of irrepressible delight banished the frowns in which she had dressed herself, and she uttered in a voice of the most unaffected satisfaction, If you will really do that, Major Allen, I can't suspect any longer, you know, that you have given mine to any one else."

"Assuredly not, most beautiful angel!" cried the delighted lover: "thus, then, let us give back these paper ties, and be bound only by"

The widow stretched out her hand for the document which he had already taken from his pocket-book; but to yield this, though he had no wish to keep it, was not the object nearest his heart; holding it, therefore, playfully above his head, he said, "Let not one of us, dearest, seem more ready than the other in this act of mutual confidence! give mine with one hand, as you receive your own with the other."

"Now, then!" said Mrs. Barnaby, eagerly extending both her hands, in order at once to give and take.

"Now then!" replied the major joyously, imitating her action; and the next instant each had seized the paper held by the other with an avidity greatly resembling that with which a zealous player pounces upon the king when she has the ace in the hand at "shorts."

‘ Now, Mrs. Barnaby, I will wish you good morning,’ said the gentleman, as he tore the little document to atoms. . . . ‘ I have been fortunate enough, since I last enjoyed the happiness of seeing you, to discover the exact locality of Silverton Park, and the precise pedigree of your beautiful greys.’

The equanimity of the widow was shaken for a moment, but no longer ; she, too, had been doing her best to annihilate the precious morsel of paper, and, rising majestically, she scattered the fragments on the ground, saying, in a tone at least as triumphant as his own, ‘ And I, Major Allen, or whatever else your name may chance to be, have, since last I had the felicity of seeing you, enjoyed the edifying spectacle of beholding your friend Captain Maintry, alias Purdham, in the hands of justice, for assisting your faithful servant William in breaking open my boxes and robbing me. . . . Should the circumstance be still unknown to you, I fear you may be disappointed to hear that both my money and plate have been recovered. There may be some fanciful difference between Silverton Park and a snug property at Silverton, . . . but I rather suspect that, of the two, I have gained most by our morning’s work. Farewell, sir ! . . . If you will take my advice, you will not continue much longer in Clifton. . . . I may feel myself called upon to hint to the magistrates that it might assist the ends of justice if you were taken up and examined as an accomplice in this affair.’

The lady had decidedly the best of it, as ladies always should have ; for the crest-fallen major looked as if he must, had he been poetically inclined, have exclaimed in the words of Comus,—

“ She fables not, I feel that I do fear,”

and without any farther attempt to carry off the palm of victory, he made his way down stairs ; and it is now many years since he has been heard of in the vicinity of Clifton.

CHAPTER X.

A DISAGREEABLE BREAKFAST-TABLE. — MR. STEPHENSON GIVES HIS FRIEND COLONEL HUBERT WARNING TO DEPART. — A PROPOSAL, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Mrs. Barnaby and Major Allen were not the only persons to whom that twenty-sixth of April proved an eventful day.

Colonel Hubert and his friend Stephenson met as usual at the breakfast-table, and it would be difficult to say which of them was the most pre-occupied, and the most unfit for ordinary conversation. Stephenson, however, though vexed at not being already the betrothed husband of his lovely Agnes, was full of hopeful anticipation, and his unfitness for conversation arose rather from the fulness of his heart, than the depression of his spirits.

Not so Colonel Hubert: it was hardly possible to suffer from a greater feeling of melancholy dissatisfaction with all things than he did on the morning after Mrs. Peters's concert.

That the despised Agnes, the niece of the hateful Mrs. Barnaby, had risen in his estimation to be considered as the best, the first, the loveliest of created beings, was not the worst misfortune that had fallen upon him.

There was, indeed, a degree of perversity in the case that almost justified his thinking himself the most unfortunate of mortals. After having attained the sober age of thirty-seven years, if not untouched, at least uninjured, by all the reiterated volleys which he had stood from Cupid's quiver, it was certainly rather provoking to find himself falling distractedly in love with a little obscure girl, young enough to be his daughter, and perhaps, from the unhappy circumstance of her dependence upon such a relative as Mrs. Barnaby, the very last person in the world with whom he would have wished to connect himself. This was bad enough; but even this was not all. With the airs of a senior and a Mentor, he had taken upon himself to lecture his friend upon the preposterous absurdity of giving way to such an attachment, thus rendering it almost *morally impossible* for him, under any imaginable circumstances, to ask the love of Agnes, even though something in

his inmost heart whispered to him that he should not ask in vain. Nor did the catalogue of his embarrassments end here, for he was placed *vis-à-vis* to his open-hearted friend, who, he was quite certain, would within five minutes begin again the oft-repeated confidential avowal of his love; accompanied, probably, with renewed assurances of his intentions to make proposals, which Colonel Hubert, from what he had seen last night, fancied himself quite sure would never be accepted.

What a wretched, what a hopeless dilemma was he placed in! Was he to see the man he professed to love expose himself to the misery of offering his hand, in defiance of a thousand obstacles, to a woman who, he felt almost sure, would reject him? Or could he interfere to prevent it, at the very moment that his heart told him nothing but the pretensions of Frederick could prevent his proposing to her himself.

Colonel Hubert sat stirring his coffee in moody silence, and dreading to hear Frederick open his lips; but his worst fears as to what he might utter, were soon realised by Stephenson's exclaiming,—

"Well, Hubert! . . . it is still to do. I was defeated last night, but it shall not be my fault if I go to rest this, without receiving her promise to become my wife. Her aunt is a horror—a monster—any thing, every thing you may please to call her; but Agnes is an angel, and Agnes must be mine!"

Colonel Hubert looked more gloomy still; but he continued to stir his coffee, and said nothing.

"How can you treat me thus, Hubert?" . . . said the young man reproachfully. "There is a proud superiority in this affected silence a thousand times more mortifying than any thing you could say. Begin again to revile me as heretofore for my base endurance of a Barnaby . . . describe the vexation of my brother, the indignation of my sisters! . . . this would be infinitely more endurable than such contemptuous silence."

"My dear, dear Frederick, I know not what to say," replied the agitated Hubert. . . . "Had my words the power to make you leave this place within the hour, I would use my last breath to speak them . . . for certain am I, Frederick—I am most surely certain—that this suit can bring you nothing but misery and disappointment. Let me acknowledge that the young lady herself is worthy of all love, admiration, and reve-

rence; . . . I truly think so . . . I believe it . . . I am sure of it . . . but" . . . and here Colonel Hubert stopped short, resumed his coffee-cup, and said no more.

"This is intolerable, sir," said the vexed Frederick. "Go on, if you please; say all you have to say, but stop not thus at unshaped insinuations, more injurious, more insulting far, than any thing your eloquence could find the power to utter."

"Frederick, you mistake me . . . I insinuate nothing . . . I believe in my inmost soul that Agnes Willoughby is one of the most faultless beings upon earth. . . . But this will not prevent your suit to her from being a most unhappy one. . . . Forget her, Frederick . . . travel awhile, my dear friend . . . leave her, Stephenson, and your future years will be the happier."

"Colonel Hubert, the difference in our ages is your only excuse for the unnatural counsel you so coldly give. You are no longer a young man, sir. . . . You no longer are capable of judging for one who is; and I confess to you, that for the present I think our mutual enjoyment would rather be increased than lessened were we to separate. If I remember rightly, you purposed when we came here to stay only till your sister's marriage was over. It is now a fortnight since that event took place, and it is probably solely out of compliment to me that you remain here. If so, let me release you. . . . In future times I hope we may meet with pleasanter feelings than any we can share at present; and, besides, my stay here—which for aught I know may be prolonged for months—will, under probable circumstances, throw me a good deal into intimacy and intercourse with your detested Mrs. Barnaby, wherein I certainly cannot wish or desire that you should follow me; and therefore . . . all things considered, you must hold me excused if I say . . . that I should hear of your departure from Clifton with pleasure."

Colonel Hubert rose from his seat and walked about the room. He felt that his heart was softer at that moment than befitted the age with which Frederick reproached him. He was desired to absent himself by one for whose warm-hearted young love he had perhaps neglected the soberer friendships of superior men, and that, too, at a moment when he felt that he more than ever deserved a continuance of that love. *Was he not at that instant crushing with Spartan courage a*

passion within his own breast which he believed secretly, silently, unacknowledged even to his own heart, to be returned? and this terrible sacrifice was made, not because his pride opposed his yielding to it, but because he could not have endured the idea of supplanting Frederick even when it should be acknowledged that no shadow of hope remained for him. And for this it was that he was thus insultingly desired to depart.

Generous Hubert! A few moment's struggle decided him. He resolved to go, and that immediately. He would not remain to witness the broken spirit of his hot-headed friend after he should have received the refusal which, as he so strongly suspected, awaited him, neither would he expose himself to the danger of seeing Agnes afterwards.

Without as yet replying to Frederick, he rang the bell, and desired that post-horses might immediately be ordered for his carriage, and his valet told to prepare his trunks for travelling with as little delay as possible. These directions given, the friends were once more *tête-à-tête*, and then Colonel Hubert ventured to trust his voice, and answer the harsh language he had received.

"Frederick," he said, "you have spoken as you would not have done had you given yourself a little more time for consideration, for you have spoken unkindly and unjustly. I would still prevail on you, if I could, to turn away from this lovely girl without committing yourself by making her an offer of marriage. I would strongly advise this.—I would strongly advise your remembering, while it is yet time, the pang it may cost you should any thing in short, believe me, you would suffer less by leaving Clifton immediately with me, than by remaining under circumstances which I am sure will turn out inimical to your happiness. . . . Will you be advised, and let us depart together?"

"No, Colonel Hubert, I will not. I have no wish to detain you, I have already said this with sufficient frankness; be equally wise on your side, and do not attempt to drag me away in your train."

These were pretty nearly the last words which were exchanged between them; Frederick Stephenson soon left the house to wander about till the hour arrived for making his *visit in Rodney Place*; and in less than two hours Colonel

Hubert was driving rapidly through Bristol on his way to London.

* * * * *

As soon as Mrs. Barnaby and the friendly Mr. Peters were fairly off the premises, and on their road to look after the thief, Mary called a consultation on the miserably jaded looks of poor Agnes; and having her own particular reasons for not choosing that she should look half dead . . . inasmuch as she was persuaded the promised visit of Frederick was not intended to be for nothing . . . she peremptorily insisted upon her taking sal volatile, bathing her eyes in cold water, and then either lying on the sofa or taking a walk upon the down till luncheon-time, that being the usual hour of Mr. Stephenson's morning visits.

Agnes submitted herself very meekly to all this discipline, save the depositing herself on the sofa, to which she objected vehemently, deciding for the walk on the down as the only thing at all likely to cure her headache. It was on their way to this favourite magazine of fresh air that Mr. Stephenson met them. To Agnes the rencontre was an extreme annoyance, for she wanted to be quite quiet, and this was what Frederick Stephenson never permitted her to be. But she could not run away; and so she continued to walk on till, just after passing the turnpike, she discovered that Mary and Elizabeth Peters were considerably in their rear. This *tête-à-tête*, however, caused her not the slightest embarrassment; and if she was to be talked to, instead of being permitted to sink into the dark but downy depths of meditation, which was now her greatest indulgence, it mattered very little to her who was the talker. She stopped, however, from politeness to her friends, and a sort of natural instinct of *bien-séance* towards herself, saying, "I was not aware, Mr. Stephenson, that we had been walking so fast; I think we had better turn back to them."

"May I entreat you, Miss Willoughby," said the young man, "to remain a few moments longer alone with me. . . . It is not that you have walked fast, but your friends have walked slowly, for they, at least, I plainly perceive, have read my secret. . . . And is it possible that you, Agnes, have not read it also? . . . Is it possible that you have yet to learn how fervently I love you?"

No young girl hears such an avowal as this for the first time

without feeling considerable agitation and embarrassment ; but many things contributed to increase these feelings tenfold in the case of Agnes . . . for first, which is rarely the case, the declaration was wholly unexpected ; secondly, it was wholly unwelcome ; and, thirdly, it inspired a feeling of acute terror lest, flattering and advantageous as she knew such a proposal to be, it might tempt her friends . . . or set on her terrible aunt . . . to disturb her with solicitations which, by only hearing them, would profane the sentiment to which she had secretly devoted herself for ever.

Greatly, however, as she wished to answer him at once and definitively, she was unable to articulate a single word.

" Will you not speak to me, Agnes ? " resumed Frederick, after a painful pause. " Will you not tell me what I may hope in return for the truest affection that ever warmed the heart of man ? . . . Will you not even look at me ? "

Agnes now stood still as if to recover breath. She knew that he had a right to expect an answer from her, and she knew that sooner or later she should be compelled to speak it ; so, making an effort as great perhaps in its self-command as many that have led a hero to eternal fame, she said, but without raising her eyes from the ground, " Mr. Stephenson, I am very sorry indeed that you love me, because it is quite *quite* impossible I should ever love you in return."

" Good God ! Miss Willoughby, . . . is it thus you answer me ? . . . Do you know that the words you utter so lightly, so coldly, must, if persisted in, doom me to a life of misery ? Can you hear this, Agnes, and feel no touch of pity ? "

" Pray do not talk in that way, Mr. Stephenson ! . . . It gives me so very much pain."

" Then you will unsay those cruel words ? . . . You will tell me that time and faithful, constant love may do something for me . . . Oh ! tell me it shall be so."

" But I *cannot* tell you so, Mr. Stephenson," said Agnes with the most earnest emphasis. " It would be most wicked to do so because it would be untrue. You are very young and very gay, Mr. Stephenson ; and I cannot think that what I have said can vex you long, particularly if you will believe it at once, and talk no more about it. And now I think that we had better walk back to Mary, if you please."

Having said this she turned about, and began to walk rapidly towards Clifton.

"Can this be possible?" said the young man, greatly agitated; "so young, and seemingly so gentle, and yet so harsh and so determined. Oh! Agnes, why did you not let me guess this end to all my hopes before they had grown so strong? You must have seen my love — my adoration... You must have known that every earthly hope for me depended upon you!"

"No, no, no," cried Agnes, greatly distressed. "I never knew it — I never guessed it. . . . How should I guess what was so very unlikely?"

"Unlikely! Are you laughing at me, Agnes? Unlikely! Ask your friends — ask Miss Peters if she thought it unlikely."

"I do not believe so strange a thought ever entered her head, Mr. Stephenson; for if it had, I am sure she would have put me on my guard against it."

"On your guard against it, Miss Willoughby! What is there in my situation, fortune, or character, that should render it necessary for your friend to put you on your guard against me? Surely you use strange language."

"Then do not make me talk any more about it, Mr. Stephenson. It is very likely that I may express myself amiss, for I am so sorry and so vexed that indeed I hardly know what I say; but pray forgive me, and do not be unhappy about me any longer."

"Agnes! you love another!" suddenly exclaimed Frederick, his face becoming crimson. . . . "There is no other way of accounting for such cold indifference, such hard insensibility."

Agnes coloured as violently in her turn, and bursting into tears, said with great displeasure, "That is what nobody in the world has a right to say to me, and I will never, if I can help it, permit you to say it again."

She now increased her speed, and had nearly reached the Misses Peters, notwithstanding all the beautiful summer flowers they had found by the way's side; saying no more in reply, either to the remonstrances or the passionate pleadings of Mr. Stephenson, when at length he laid his hand upon her arm, and detained her while he said, "Agnes, if you accept my love, and consent to become my wife, I will release you from the power of your aunt, place you in a splendid home.

and surround you with friends as pure-minded and as elegant as yourself. Is this nothing? Answer me then one word, and one word only. . . . Is your refusal of my hand and my affection final?"

"Yes, sir," said Agnes, still weeping; for his accusation of her having another love continued to ring in her ears, and make her heart swell almost to bursting.

"Speak not in anger, Agnes!" said he mildly. "What I have felt for you does not deserve such a return."

"I know it, I know it," replied Agnes, weeping more violently still, "and I am very wrong, as well as very unhappy. Pray, Mr. Stephenson, forgive me," and she held out her hand to him.

He took it, and held it for a moment between both his. "Unhappy, Agnes?" he said, "why should you be unhappy? Oh! if my love, my devotion, could render you otherwise! But you will not trust me? You will not let me pass my life in labouring to make yours happy?"

"Nothing can make me happy, Mr. Stephenson; pray do not talk any more about it, for indeed, indeed, I cannot be your wife."

He abruptly raised her hand to his lips, and then let it fall. "May Heaven bless and make you happy in your own way, whatever that may be!" he cried, and turning from her, reached the verge of the declivity that overhung the river, then plunging down it with very heedless haste, he was out of sight immediately.

This was a catastrophe wholly unexpected by Miss Peters, who now hastened to meet the disconsolate-looking Agnes. "What in the world can you have said to him, my dear, to send him off in that style? I trust that you have not quarrelled."

Most unfeignedly distressed and embarrassed was Agnes at this appeal, and the more so because her friend Mary was not alone. . . . To her perhaps she might have been able to tell the terrible adventure which had befallen her, but before Elizabeth it was impossible; and, pressing Mary's arm, she said in a whisper, "Ask me no questions, dearest Mary, now, for I cannot answer them wait only till we get home."

But to wait in a state of such tormenting uncertainty was *beyond the philosophy* of Mary, so she suddenly stopped, say-

ing, "Elizabeth! walk on slowly for a few minutes, will you? . . . I have something that I particularly wish to say to Agnes." . . . And the good-natured Elizabeth walked on without ever turning her head to look back at them.

"What has happened? . . . what has he said to you? . . . and what have you said to him?" hastily inquired the impatient friend.

"Oh, Mary! . . . he has made me so very unhappy . . . and the whole thing is so extremely strange . . . I cannot hide any thing from you, Mary, . . . but it will kill me should you let my aunt hear of it. . . . He has made me an offer, Mary!"

"Of course, Agnes, I know he has . . . But how does that account for his running off in that strange wild way? and how does it account for your crying and looking so miserable? Why did he run away as if he were afraid to see us, Agnes? and when are you going to see him again?"

"I shall never see him again, Mary," said Agnes gravely.

"Then you *have* quarrelled! . . . Good Heaven, what folly! I suppose he said something about your aunt that you fancied was not civil; . . . but all things considered, Agnes, ought you not to have forgiven it?"

"Indeed, Mary, he said nothing that was rude about my aunt, and I am sure he did not mean to be uncivil in any way . . . though certainly he hurt and offended me very much . . . but perhaps he did not intend it."

"Hurt and offended you, Agnes? . . . Let me beg you to tell me at once what it was he did say to you."

"I will tell you every thing but one, and that I own to you I had rather not repeat . . . and it does not signify, for that was not the reason he ran off so."

"And what was the reason?" — "A very foolish one, indeed, and I am sure you will laugh at it . . . it was only because I said I could not marry him."

"You said that, Agnes? . . . You said you could not marry him?"

"Yes, I did! I do not wish to marry him; indeed, I would not marry him for the world."

"And this is the end of it all!" exclaimed Miss Peters, with much vexation. "I have much mistaken you, Agnes . . . I thought you were suffering greatly from being dependent on your aunt Barnaby."

"And do you doubt it now, Mary?"

"How can I continue to think this, when you have just refused an offer of marriage from a young man, well born, nobly allied, with a splendid fortune, extremely handsome, and possessed, as I truly believe, of more excellent and amiable qualities than often fall to the share of any mortal? How can I believe, after this, that you really feel unhappy from the circumstances of your present situation?"

"All that you say is very true, and I cannot deny a word of it; . . . but what can one do, Mary, if one does not happen to love a man? . . . you would not have one marry him, would you?"

"How like a child you talk! . . . Why should you not love him? with manners so agreeable, such excellent qualities, and a fortune beyond that of many noblemen."

"But you don't suppose I could love him the better for his being rich, do you, Mary?"

"You are a little fool, Agnes, and I know not what to suppose. Perhaps, my dear, you think him too old for you? Perhaps you will not choose to fall in love till you meet an Adonis about your own age?"

"It is you who are talking nonsense now," replied Agnes, with some warmth. "So far from his being too old, I think . . . that is to say, I don't think . . . I mean that I suppose every body would think people a great deal older, might be a great deal . . . But this is all nothing to the purpose, Mary. . . . I would not marry Mr. Stephenson if . . . But let us say no more on the subject . . . only, for pity's sake, do not let my aunt know any thing about it!"

"She shall not hear it from me, Agnes," replied Miss Peters. . . . "But I cannot understand you — you have disappointed me. . . . However, I have no right to be angry, and so, as you say, we will talk no more about it. Come, let us overtake Elizabeth; we must not let her go all the way to Clifton in solitary state."

And so ended the very promising trial at match-making, upon which the pretty Mary Peters had wasted so many useless meditations! It was a useful lesson to her, for she has never been known to interfere in any affair of the kind since.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. BARNABY FEELS CONSCIOUS OF IMPROVEMENT, AND REJOICES AT IT. — HOPES FOR THE FUTURE. — A CONVERSATION IN WHICH MUCH GENEROUS SINCERITY IS DISPLAYED. — A LETTER INTENDED TO BE EXPLANATORY, BUT FAILING TO BE SO.

MRS. BARNABY'S first feelings after the major left her were agreeable enough. She had escaped with little injury from a great danger, and, while believing herself infinitely wiser than before, she was conscious of no reason that should either lower her estimate of herself, or check the ambitious projects with which she had set forth from her native town to push her fortune in the world. But her views were improved and enlarged, her experience was more practical and enlightened, and her judgment, as to those trifling fallacies by which people of great ability are enabled to delude people of little, though in no degree changed as to its *morale*, was greatly purified and sharpened as to the means to be employed. Thus, by way of example, it may be mentioned that, during the hour of mental examination which followed Major Allen's adieux, Mrs. Barnaby determined never again to mention Silverton Park; and, if at any time led to talk of her favourite greys, that the pastures they fed in, and the roads they traversed, should on no account be particularly specified. Neither her courage nor her hopes were at all lowered by this her first adventure; on the contrary, by setting her to consider from whence arose the blunder, it led her to believe that her danger had been occasioned solely by her own too great humility in not having soared high enough to seek her quarry.

"In making new acquaintance," thus ran her soliloquy— "in making new acquaintance, the rank and station of the party should be too unequivocal to render a repetition of such danger possible . . . I was to blame in so totally neglecting the evident admiration of Colonel Hubert, in order to gratify the jealous feelings of Major Allen . . . That was a man to whom I might have devoted myself without danger, his family and fortune known to all the world . . . and himself so every way calculated to do me honour. But it is too late now ! . . .

His feelings have been too deeply wounded . . . I cannot forget the glances of jealous anger which I have seen him throw on that unworthy Allen . . . But my time must not be wasted in regrets ; I must look forward."

And look forward she did with a very bold and dashing vein of speculation, although for the present moment her power of putting any new plans in action was greatly paralysed by her having been bound over to prosecute Betty Jacks and her accomplices at the next Bristol assizes. Now Bristol and its vicinity had become equally her contempt and aversion. The major had taught her to consider the trade-won wealth of the Peterses as something derogatory to her dignity ; and though she still hoped to make them useful, she had altogether abandoned the notion that they could make her great. During the time that it would be necessary for her to remain at Clifton, however, she determined to maintain as much intimacy with them as " their very stiff manners " would permit, and carefully to avoid any thing approaching to another affair of the heart till she should have left their neighbourhood, and the scene of her late failure behind.

As soon as her spirits had recovered the double shock they had received from the perfidies of Betty Jacks and Major Allen, she remembered with great satisfaction the discovery made of Agnes's singing powers. Though more than eighteen years had passed since her musical father and mother had warbled together for the delight of the Silverton *soirées*, Mrs. Barnaby had not forgotten the applause their performances used to elicit, nor the repeated assurances of the best informed among their auditors, that the voices of both were of very first-rate quality. The belief that Agnes inherited their powers, now suggested more than one project. In the first place, it would make the parties she was determined to give extremely attractive, and might very probably be sufficient to render her at once the fashion either at Cheltenham, which she intended should be the scene of her next campaign, or any where else where it was her will and pleasure to display it. Nor was this ornamental service the only one to which she thought it possible she might convert the voice of Agnes. She knew that the exploits she contemplated were hazardous, as well as splendid ; and that, although success was probable, failure *might be possible*, in which case she might fall back

upon this newly-discovered treasure, and either marry her niece, or put her on the stage, or make her a singing mistress, as she should find most feasible and convenient.

With these notions in her head, she attacked Agnes on the singular concealment of her talent, as well as upon other matters during breakfast the morning after the unlamented major's departure, which was in fact the first time they had been alone together, Agnes having passed the whole of the preceding day at Rodney Place.

In answer to her niece's gentle salutation, she said in a tone very far from amiable, though it affected to be so, —

"Yes, yes, good morning, aunt! . . . that's all very well; . . . and now please to tell me where I shall find another young lady living with a generous relation to whom she owes her daily bread, who, knowing that relation's anxiety about every thing concerning her, has chosen to make a secret of the only thing on earth she can do. . . . Tell me, if you can, where I shall find any thing like that?"

"If you mean my singing, aunt, I have told you already why I never said any thing about it. . . . My only reason was, because I did not like to ask you for a piano."

"That's all hypocrisy, Miss Agnes; and let who will be taken in by you, I am not . . . and you may just remember that, miss, now and always. You were afraid, perhaps, that I might make you of some use to me. But the scheme won't answer. With the kindest temper in the world, I have plenty of resolution to do just whatever I think right, and that's what I shall do by you. I shall say no more about it in this nasty, vulgar, merchandising sort of a place; but as soon as we get among ladies and gentlemen that I consider my equals, I shall begin to give regular parties like other people of fashion, and then . . . let me hear you refuse to sing when I ask you . . . and we shall see what will happen next."

"Indeed, aunt, I believe you are mistaken about my voice," replied Agnes: "I have never had teaching enough to enable me to sing so well as you seem to suppose; and, in fact, I know little or nothing about it, except what dear good Mr. Wilmot used to tell me; and I don't believe he has heard any really good singing for the last twenty years."

"And I was not at Mrs. Peters's the other night, I suppose, *Miss Willoughby*? . . . and I did not hear all the praise, and

the rapture, and the fuss, didn't I? What a fool you do seem to take me for, Agnes! However, I don't mean to quarrel with you You know what sacrifices I have made, and not all your bad behaviour shall prevent my making more still for you. . . . You shall have a master, if I find you want one; and when we get to Cheltenham, you shall be sure to have a piano-forte. Does that please you?"

"I shall be very glad to be able to practise again, aunt, only"

"Only what, if you please?"

"Why, I mean to say that I should be sorry you should expect to make a great performer of me; for I am certain that you will be disappointed."

"Stuff and nonsense! Don't trouble yourself about my disappointments — I'll take care to get what I want. . . . And there's another talent, Miss Agnes, which I shall expect to find in you; and I hope you have made a secret of that too, for I never saw much sign of it. . . . I want you to be very active and clever, and to act as my maid till I get one. Indeed, I'm not sure I shall ever get one again, they seem to be such plagues; and if I find you ain't too great a fool to do what I want, I have a notion that I shall take a tiger instead — it will be much more respectable. . . . Pray, Agnes, have you any idea about dressing hair?"

"I think I could do it as well for you, aunt, as Jerningham did," replied Agnes with perfect good-humour.

"And that's not quite so well as I want; but I suppose you know that as well as I do, only you choose to show off your impertinence. . . . And there's my drawers to keep in order dunce as you are, I suppose you can do that; and fifty other little things there will be, now that good-for-nothing baggage is gone, which I promise you I do not intend to do for myself."

Did Agnes repent having sent the enamoured possessor of seven thousand a year from her in despair, as she listened to this sketch of her future occupations? No, not for a moment. No annoyances that her aunt could threaten, no escape from them that Mr. Stephenson could offer, had the power of mastering in her mind the one prominent idea, which, like the rod of the chosen priest, swallowed up all the rest.

And this engrossing, this cherished, this secretly hoarded

umphantly, that I have never known a moment's peace from that day to this, nor ever shall till you send me your forgiveness as frankly as I ask it. You may do this with the more safety, dear Hubert, because we shall never again quarrel on the same occasion; and so perfectly have I found you to be right in all you said and all you hinted on that fair but unfortunate subject, that henceforward I think I shall be afraid to pronounce upon the colour of a lady's hair, or the tincture of her skin, till I have heard your judgment thereon. Let us, therefore, never talk again either of the terrible Mrs. Barnaby or her beautiful niece; but, forgetting that any thing of the kind could breed discord between us, remember only that I am, and ever must be,

“Your most affectionate friend,

“FREDERICK STEPHENSON.”

How many times did Colonel Hubert read over this letter before he could satisfy himself that he understood it? This is a question that cannot be answered, because he never did by means of these constantly repeated readings ever arrive at any such conclusion at all. Had Mrs. Barnaby's name been altogether omitted, he might have fancied that his own deep but unacknowledged belief that Miss Willoughby would refuse his friend, had been manifest in the dissuasive words he had spoken, notwithstanding his caution. But this allusion to the widow, who had so repeatedly been the theme of his prophetic warnings, left him at liberty to suppose that Frederick's solitary and repentant rumination upon all he had propounded on that fertile subject, had finally induced him to give up the pursuit, and to leave Clifton without having proposed to her niece.

Any thing more destructive to the tranquillity of Colonel Hubert than this doubt can hardly be imagined. He had long persuaded himself, it is true, that it was impossible, under any circumstances, he could ever confess to Agnes what his own feelings were, as his friendship for Stephenson must put it totally out of his power to do so. . . . The frankness of Frederick's early avowal of his passion to him, and the style and tone of the opposition with which he had met it, must inevitably lay him under such an imputation of dishonour, if he addressed her himself, as he could not bear to think of. . . . *Nevertheless, he felt, or fancied, that he should be much more*

tranquil and resigned could he have known to a certainty whether Stephenson had proposed to her or not. It was long, however, ere any opportunity of satisfying himself on this point arose. The reconciliation, indeed, between himself and his friend, was perfect, and their letters breathed the new spirit of affectionate confidence as heretofore; but how could Colonel Hubert abuse this confidence by asking a question which could not be answered in any way, without opening afresh the wound that he feared still rankled in the breast of his friend?

It would be selfish and ungenerous in the extreme, and must not be thought of; but this forbearance robbed the high-minded Hubert of the only consolation that his situation left him, — namely, the belief that the young Agnes, notwithstanding the disparity in their years, had been too near loving him to accept the hand of another. Of the two interpretations to which the letter of Frederick was open, this, the most flattering to himself, was the one that faded fastest away from the mind of Colonel Hubert, till he hardly dared remember that he had once believed it possible; and he finally remained with the persuasion that his too tractable friend had yielded to his arguments against the marriage, without ever having put the feelings of Agnes to the test, which he would have given the world to believe had been tried, and been withstood.

CHAPTER XII.

A LUCKY ESCAPE. — A MELANCHOLY PARTING. — MRS. BARNABY SETTLES HERSELF AT CHELTENHAM. — HER FIRST SORTIE. — BOARDING-HOUSE BREAKFAST. — A NEW ACQUAINTANCE. — A MEDICAL CONVERSATION.

IN addition to Mrs. Barnaby's pretty strong confidence in herself and her own devices, she soon learned to think that she was very especially favoured by fortune; for just as she began to find her idle and most unprofitable abode at Clifton intolerably tedious, and that the recovery of her property hardly atoned for the inconvenience of being obliged to prosecute those who had stolen it, she received the welcome intelligence that the trio had escaped by means of the superior ingenuity

of Captain Maintry, alias Purdham. The ends of justice being considerably less dear to the widow's heart than the end of the adventures she promised herself at Cheltenham, she welcomed the intelligence most joyfully, and set about her preparations for departure without an hour's delay.

Several very elegant shops at Clifton had so earnestly requested the honour of her name upon their books, that Mrs. Barnaby had found it impossible to refuse; and the consequence was, that when she announced her intended departure, so unexpected an amount of "mere nothings" crowded in upon her, that she would have been very considerably embarrassed, had not the manner of raising money during the last years of her father's life been fresh in her memory, showing her, as her property was all in the funds, and, happily or unhappily, standing in her own name, that nothing could be more easy than to write to her broker, and order him to sell out a couple of hundreds.

Confidence in one's self,—the feeling that there is a power within us of sufficient strength to reach the goal we have in view,—is in general a useful as well as a pleasant state of mind; but in Mrs. Barnaby it was very likely to prove otherwise. In all her meditations, in all her plottings, in all her reasonings, she saw nothing before her but success; the alternative, and all its possible consequences, never suggested itself to her as possible, and therefore no portion of her clever ingenuity was ever employed, even in speculation, to ward it off.

In a word, then, her bills, which, by the by, were wholly and solely for her own dress, were all paid without difficulty or delay, and the day was fixed for the departure of herself and Agnes by a stage-coach from Bristol to Cheltenham.

Poor Agnes wept bitterly as she received the affectionate farewells of her friends in Rodney Place; and Mary, who really loved her, wept too, though it is possible that the severe disappointment which had attended her matrimonial project for her, had a little dulled the edge of the enthusiasm at first excited by the sweetness and beauty of the poor motherless girl. But, under no circumstances, could the grief of Miss Peters at losing sight of her have been comparable to that felt by Agnes herself. How little had the tyranny of Mrs. Barnaby, and all the irksome *désagrémens* of her home, occupied her attention during the month she had spent at Clifton! How

completely it had all been lost sight of in the society of Mary, and the hospitable kindness of Rodney Place!

"But, oh! the heavy change!" . . . That which had been chased by the happy lightness of her young spirit, as a murky cloud is chased by the bright sun of April, now rolled back upon her, looking like a storm that was to last for ever! She knew it, she felt its approach, and, like a frightened fawn, trembled as she gazed around, and saw no shelter near.

"You will write to me, dear Agnes!" said Mary. "I shall think of you very often, and it will be a real pleasure to hear from you."

"And to write to you, Mary, will be by far the greatest pleasure I can possibly have. But how can I ask you to write to me in return? . . . I am sure my aunt will never let me receive a letter; . . . and yet, would it not be worth its weight in gold?"

"Don't take up sorrow at interest, Agnes," replied Mary, laughing. "I don't think your dragon will be so fierce as that either. . . I can hardly imagine she would refuse to let you correspond with me."

Agnes endeavoured to return her smile, but she blushed and faltered as she said, "I mean, Mary, that she would not pay postage for me."

"Impossible!" cried Miss Peters, indignantly; "you cannot speak seriously. . . I know my mother does not believe a word about her *very* large fortune, any more than she does her *very* generous intention of leaving it to us. But she says that my uncle must have left something like a respectable income for her; and though we none of us doubt (not even Elizabeth) that she will marry with all possible speed, and when she has found a husband, with all her worldly goods will him endow; still, till this happens, it is hardly likely she will refuse to pay the postage of your letters."

"Perhaps she will not," said Agnes, blushing again for saying what she did not think; "but, at any rate, try the experiment, dearest Mary. . . To know that you have thought of me will be comfort inexpressible."

"And suppose Mr. Frederick Stephenson were to ramble back to Clifton, Agnes, . . . and suppose he were to ask me which way you are gone . . . may I tell him?"

"He never will ask you, Mary. . . ."

“But an’ if he should?” persisted Miss Peters.

“Then tell him that it would be a great deal more kind and amiable if he never again talked about me to any one.”

Arrived at Cheltenham, Mrs. Barnaby set about the business of finding a domicile with much more confidence and *savoir-faire* than heretofore. A very few inquiries made her decide upon choosing to place herself at a boarding-house; and though the price rather startled her, she not only selected the dearest, but indulged in the expensive luxury of a handsome private sitting-room.

“I know what I am about,” thought she; “faint heart never won fair lady, and sparing hand never won gay gentleman.”

It was upon the same principle that, within three days after her arrival, she had found a tiger, and got his dress (resplendent with buttons from top to toe) sent home to her private apartments, and likewise that she had determined to enter her name as a subscriber at the pump-room.

The day after all this was completed, was the first upon which she accounted her Cheltenham existence to begin; and having informed herself of the proper hours and fitting costume for each of the various stated times of appearing at the different points of re-union, she desired Agnes carefully to brush the dust from her immortal black crape bonnet, and with her own features sheltered by *paille de fantaisie*, straw-coloured ribands, and Brussels lace, she set forth, leaning on the arm of her niece, and followed by her tiger and parasol, to take her first draught at the spring, at eight o’clock in the morning.

Her spirits rose as she approached the fount on perceiving the throng of laughing, gay, and gossiping invalids that *bon ton* and bile had brought together; and when she held out her hand to receive the glass, she had more the air of a full-grown Bacchante, celebrating the rights of Bacchus, than a votary at the shrine of Hygeia. But no sooner had the health-restoring but nauseous beverage touched her lips, or rather her palate, than, making a horrible grimace, she set down the glass on the marble slab, and pushed it from her with very visible symptoms of disgust. A moment’s reflection made her turn her head to see if Agnes was looking at her.

.... but no... Agnes indeed stood at no great distance; but her whole attention seemed captivated by a tall, elegant-looking woman, who, together with an old lady leaning on her arm, appeared like herself to be occupied as spectators of the water-drinking throng.

Satisfied that her strong distaste for the unseasonary draught had not been perceived, Mrs. Barnaby backed out of the crowd, saying, as she took the arm of her niece in her way, "This water must be a very fine medicine, I am sure, for those who want it; but I don't think I shall venture upon any more of it till I have taken medical advice... it is certainly very powerful, and I think it might do you a vast deal of good, Agnes."

These words being spoken in the widow's audible tone, which she always rather desired than not should make her presence known at some distance... excepting, indeed, when she was making love... were very distinctly heard by the ladies above mentioned; and the elder of them, having witnessed Mrs. Barnaby's look of disgust as she set down her unemptied glass, laughed covertly and quietly, but with much merriment, saying, though rather to herself than her companion, "Good!... very good, indeed!... This will prove an acquisition."

A turn or two up and down the noble walk upon which the pump-room opens was rendered very delightful to the widow, by showing her that even at that early hour many dashing-looking, lace-frocked men, moustached and whiskered "to the top of her bent," might be met sauntering there; and having enjoyed this till her watch told her the boarding-house breakfast hour was arrived, she turned from the fascinating promenade in excellent spirits, and after a few minutes passed at the mirror in arranging her cap and her curls, and refreshing her bloom, entered for the first time the public eating-room, well disposed to enjoy herself in every way.

Having left the Peters family behind her, she no longer thought it necessary to restrain her fancy in the choice of colours; and, excepting occasionally on a provincial stage, it would be difficult to find a costume more brilliant in its various hues than that of our widow as she followed the obsequious waiter to the place assigned her. Agnes came after her, like a tranquil moonlit night following the meteoric dawn.

glare of noisy fireworks; the dazzled sight that had been drawn to Mrs. Barnaby as she entered rested upon Agnes, as if to repose itself, and by the time they both were seated, it was on her fair, delicate face, and mourning garb, that every eye was fixed. The vicarial crape and bombasin which she wore in compliance with the arrangement of her too sensitive aunt, did Agnes at least one service among strangers, for it precluded the idea of any near relationship between her companion and herself; and though no one could see them together without marvelling at the discordant fellowship of two persons so remarkably contrasted in manner and appearance, none explained it by presuming that they were aunt and niece.

The party assembled and assembling at the breakfast-table consisted of fourteen gentlemen and five ladies; the rest of the company inhabiting the extensive and really elegant mansion preferring to breakfast in their own apartments, though there were few who did not condescend to abandon their privacy at dinner. Of the gentlemen now present, about half were of that lemon tint which at the first glance showed their ostensible reason for being there was the real one. Of the other half it would be less easy to render an account. The five ladies were well dressed; and, two being old, and three young, they may be said for the most part to have been well-looking. Any more accurate description of them generally would but encumber and delay the narrative unnecessarily, as such among them as may come particularly in contact with my heroine or her niece will of necessity be brought into notice.

Our two ladies were of course placed side by side, Mrs. Barnaby being flanked to the right by a staid and sober gentleman of middle age, who happily acted as a wet blanket to the crackling and sparkling vivacity of the widow, obliging her, after one or two abortive attempts at conversation, and such sort of boarding-table *agaceries* as the participation of coffee and eggs may give room for, either to eat her breakfast in silence, or to exercise her social propensities on the neighbour of Agnes. This was an elderly lady, who, though like Mrs. Barnaby, but just arrived for the season, had, unlike her, been a constant visiter at Cheltenham for the last twelve years; and being an active-minded spinster of tolerably easy means, and completely mistress of them, was as capable of giving all *sorts of local information* as Mrs. Barnaby was desirous of re-

ceiving it. Miss Morrison (such was her name) being now, and having ever been a lady of great prudence and the most unimpeachable discretion, might probably have taken fright had she chanced, at first meeting with our widow, to see her under full sail in chase of conquest; but luckily this was not apparent at their first interview, and the appearance and manner of Agnes offering something like a guarantee for the respectability of the lady to whose charge she was intrusted, she met Mrs. Barnaby's advances towards making an acquaintance with great civility.

Before many sentences had been exchanged between them, the spinster had the satisfaction of perceiving, that all her minute acquaintance with Cheltenham and its ways gave her an immeasurable superiority over her richly-dressed new acquaintance; while the widow with like facility discovered that all she most particularly desired to know, might be learned from the very respectable-looking individual near whom her good fortune had placed her.

The consequence of this mutual discovery was so brisk an exchange of question and answer as obliged Agnes to lean back in her chair, and eat her breakfast by means of a very distant communication with the table; . . . but she was thankful her aunt had fallen upon a quiet though rather singular-looking female of forty, instead of another whiskered Major Allen, and willingly placed herself in the attitude least likely to interrupt their conversation.

"Never been at Cheltenham before? . . . really! . . . Well, ma'am, I have little doubt that you will soon declare it shall not be your last visit, though it is your first," said Miss Morrison.

"Indeed, ma'am, I think you will prove right in that opinion," replied Mrs. Barnaby, "for I never saw a place I admired so much. We are just come from Clifton, which is called so beautiful, . . . but it is not to be compared to Cheltenham."

"You are just come from Clifton, are you, ma'am? . . . I understand it is a very beautiful place, but terribly dull, I believe, when compared to this. . . . If a person knows Cheltenham well, and has a little notion how to take advantage of all that is going on, he may pass months and months here without ever knowing what it is to have an idle hour . . ."

don't believe there is such another place in the whole world for employing time."

"I am sure that's a blessing," replied Mrs. Barnaby earnestly. "If there is one thing I dread and hate more than another, it is having nothing to do with my time. Idleness is indeed the root of all evil."

"I'm pleased to hear you say so, ma'am," said Miss Morrison, "because it is so exactly my own opinion, and because, too, you will find yourself so particularly well off here as to the avoiding it; and I shall be very happy, I'm sure, if any advice of mine may put you in the way of making the most of the advantages in that line that Cheltenham offers."

"You are exceedingly kind and obliging, ma'am," returned Mrs. Barnaby very graciously; "and I shall be very grateful for any counsel or instruction you can bestow. With my handsome fortune I should consider it quite a crime if I did not put my time to profit in such a place as Cheltenham."

This phrase produced its proper effect; Miss Morrison eyed the speaker not only with increased respect, but increased goodwill.

"Indeed, my dear madam, you are quite right," she said; "and by merely paying attention to such information as I shall be able to give you, I will venture to say that you will never have the weight of an idle hour upon your hands while you remain here; for what with the balls, and the music at the libraries, and the regular hours for the walks, and attendance at all the sales (and I assure you we have sometimes three in a day), and shopping, and driving between the turnpikes, if you have a carriage, and morning visits, and evening parties, and churches and chapels, if you have a taste for them, and looking over the new names, and the pump-room, and making new acquaintance, and finding out old ones, there is not a day of the week, or an hour in the day, in which one may not be well employed."

"I am sure, ma'am, it is perfectly a pleasure to a person of my active turn of mind to listen to such a description; and it is a greater pleasure still to meet with a lady like yourself, with taste and good sense to value what is valuable, and to find out how and where to enjoy it. . . . I hope we shall become better acquainted; I have a private drawing-room here where

I shall be delighted to see you. . . . Give me leave to present you with my card."

A gilt-edged and deeply-embossed card, inscribed, —

MRS. BARNABY,

The — Hotel and Boarding House,

No. 5.

was here put into Miss Morrison's hand, who received it with an air of great satisfaction, and reiterated assurances that she would by no means fail of paying her compliments.

Unlike many vain persons who receive every civility under the persuasion that it is offered for their own *beaus yeux*, Miss Morrison had sufficient good sense and experience to understand that any convenience or advantage she might derive from Mrs. Barnaby, or Mrs. Barnaby's private drawing-room, must be repaid by accommodation of some sort or other. All obligations of such kind were, for a variety of excellent reasons, always repaid by Miss Morrison with such treasure as her own lips could coin, aided by her wit and wisdom, without drawing on any other exchequer; and now, having placed her little modest slip of pasteboard, bearing in broad and legible, though manuscript characters, —

MISS MORRISON,

The — Hotel and Boarding House,

by the side of Mrs. Barnaby's buttered roll, she began at once, like an honest old maid as she was, to pay the debt almost before it was incurred.

"I don't know how they do those sort of things at Clifton, Mrs. Barnaby," she said, "but here the medical gentlemen, or at least many of them, always call on the new-comers; and though I hope and trust that neither you nor this pretty young lady, — who, I suppose, is your visiter, — though I hope with all my heart that you wo'n't, either of you, have any occasion in the world for physic or doctors, yet I advise you most certainly to fix on one in your own mind beforehand, and just let him know it. There are not more kind and agreeable acquaintances in the world than gentlemen of the medical profession . . . at least, I'm sure it is so here. There are one or two apothecaries in particular, — surgeons, though, I believe

they are called,— who certainly are as elegant, conversable gentlemen, as can be met with in London or any where, unless, indeed, just in Paris, where I certainly found the apothecaries, like every thing else, in a very out-of-the-common-way style of elegance, *toutafay par fit*, as we say on the Continent, Of course, you have been abroad, Mrs. Barnaby?"

"No, Miss Morrison, I have not," replied the widow, making head against this attack with great skill and courage. "I am obliged to confess that the extreme comfort and elegance of my own home, have absolutely made a prisoner of me hitherto; . . . but since I have lost my dear husband I find change absolutely necessary for my health and spirits, and I shall probably soon make the tour of Europe."

"Indeed! . . . Oh dear! how I envy you! . . . But you speak all the languages already?"

"Oh! perfectly."

"I'm so glad of that, Mrs. Barnaby, . . . for, upon my word, I find it quite out of my power to avoid using a French word every now and then since I came from abroad, and it is so vexing when one is not understood. A lady of your station has, of course, been taught by all sorts of foreigners; but those who can't afford this indulgence never do get the accent without going abroad. . . . I'm sure you'll find, before you have been a week on the Continent, a most prodigious difference in your accent, though I dare say it's very good already. But, a *prop po*, about the apothecaries and surgeons that I was talking about. . . . I hope you will give orders at the door that, if Mr. Alexander Pringle calls, and sends in his card, he shall be desired to walk up; and then, you know, just a *prop po de nang*, you can talk to him about whatever you wish to know; . . . and you can say, if you like it, that Miss Morrison particularly mentioned his name. . . . There is no occasion *do too* that you should give him any fee; but you may ask him a few questions about the waters *cum sa*, and you will find him the most agreeable, convenient, and instructive acquaintance *do mund*."

The breakfast was now so evidently drawing to its close, that the new friends deemed it advisable to leave the table; and Mrs. Barnaby having repeated her invitation, and Miss Morrison having replied to it by kissing her fingers, and uttering "*Mercy! Mercy! O revor,*" they parted. . . . the widow

to give orders, as she passed to her drawing room, that if Mr. Alexander Pringle called on her, he should be admitted; and the spinster to invent and fabricate, in the secret retirement of her attic retreat, some of those remarkably puzzling articles of dress, the outline of which she had studied during a three weeks' residence in Paris, and which passed current with the majority of her friends and acquaintance for being of genuine Gallic manufacture.

The prediction of Miss Morrison was speedily verified; Mr. Alexander Pringle did call at the hotel to leave his card for Mrs. Barnaby, and, in consequence of the orders given, was immediately admitted to her presence.

She was alone; for Agnes, though unfortunately there was no little dear miserable closet for her, had received the welcome *conge*, now always expressed by the words, "There, you may go to your lessons, child, if you will," and had withdrawn herself to an out-of-the-way corner in their double-bedded room, where already her desk, and other Empton treasures, had converted about four feet square of her new abode into a home. The sofa, therefore, with the table and its gaudy cover, adorned with the widow's fine work-box, a boarding-house inkstand of bright coloured china, and THE ALBUM (still sacred to the name of Isabella d'Almafonte), had all been set in the places and attitudes she thought most becoming by Mrs. Barnaby herself, and, together with her own magnificent person, formed a very charming picture as the medical gentleman entered the room; . . . but it is probable Mr. Alexander Pringle expected rather to find a patient than to be ushered into the presence of a lady in a state of health apparently so perfect.

"Pray sit down, sir! . . . Mr. Pringle, I believe?" said Mrs. Barnaby, half rising, and pointing to a chair exactly opposite her place upon the sofa.

Mr. Pringle took the indicated chair; but before he was well seated in it, the idea that some mistake might be the source of this civility occurred to him, and he rose again, made a step forward, and laid his card, specifying his name, profession, and address, on the table, immediately before the eyes of the lady.

"Oh yes!" said she, smiling with amiable condescension, "I understand perfectly; . . . and should myself, or my

young niece, or any of my servants require medical assistance, Mr. Pringle, this card (placing it carefully in her work-box) will enable us to find it. But, though at present we are all pretty well, I am really very glad to have an opportunity of seeing you, sir . . . Miss Morrison . . . I believe you know Miss Morrison? . . . (Mr. Pringle bowed) . . . Miss Morrison has named you to me in a manner that made me extremely desirous of making your acquaintance. . . . Gentlemen of your profession, Mr. Pringle, have so much knowledge of the world, that it is a great advantage for a stranger, on first arriving at a new place, to find an opportunity of conversing with them. Will you afford me five minutes while I explain to you my very peculiar situation?"

"Assuredly, madam," replied Mr. Pringle, "I shall be most happy to listen to you."

"Well, then . . . without farther apology I will explain myself. My name is Barnaby . . . I am a widow of good fortune, and without children . . . for I have lost both my little ones!" Here Mrs. Barnaby drew forth one of her embroidered handkerchiefs, as she always did when speaking of her children "which were not;" and this frequently happened, for she had a great dislike to being considered as one unblest by offspring, — a peculiarity which, together with some others, displaying themselves in the same inventive strain, proved an especial blessing to Agnes, inasmuch as it made her absence often desirable. Having wiped her eyes, and recovered her emotion, she continued: "I have no children; . . . but an elder sister . . . so much older, indeed, as almost to be considered as my mother, . . . died several years ago, leaving an orphan girl to my care. In truth, I am not a great many years older than my niece, and the anxiety of this charge has been sometimes almost too much for me. . . . However, she is a good girl, and I am most passionately attached to her. Nevertheless she has some peculiarities which give me pain, . . . one is, that she will never wear any dress but the deepest mourning, thus consecrating herself, as I may say, to the memory of her departed parents. Now this whim, Mr. Pringle, shows her spirits to be in a state requiring change of scene, and it is on this account that I have left my charming place in Devonshire, in the hope that that variety, and a gayer circle than is likely to be found in the immediate neighbour-

very bilious, and I feel quite convinced that a glass of the water every morning would be of the most essential benefit to her. . . . Unfortunately, dear creature, she is quite a spoiled child, and I do not think she will be prevailed on to take what is certainly not very pleasant to the taste, unless ordered to do it by a medical man."

"I must see the young lady, ma'am," replied Mr. Pringle, "before I can venture to prescribe for her in any way."

Mrs. Barnaby internally wished him less scrupulous; but feeling that it would be better he should send in a bill and charge a visit, than that she should lose a daily excuse for visiting the delightful pump-room, and, moreover, feeling more strongly still that, in order to make Agnes swallow the dose instead of herself, it would be good economy to pay for half-a-dozen visits, she rose from the sofa, and said with a fascinating smile, . . . "I will bring her to you myself, my dear sir, but I hope you will not disappoint me about prescribing the Cheltenham waters for her. I know her constitution well, and I venture to pledge myself to you, that she is exactly the subject for the Cheltenham treatment. . . . So bilious, poor girl! . . . so dreadfully bilious!"

Mrs. Barnaby left the room, and presently returned with Agnes, who was considerably surprised at being told that it was necessary a medical man should see her; for, in the first place, save a heaviness at her heart, she felt quite well; and in the second, she had never before, since she left Empton, perceived any great anxiety on the part of her aunt as to her being well or ill. However, she yielded implicit obedience to the command which bade her leave the letter she was writing to Miss Peters, and meekly followed her imperious protectress to their sitting-room.

Mr. Alexander Pringle was decidedly a clever man, and clever men of his profession are generally skilful in discerning diagnostics of various kinds. He had expected to see a yellow, heavy-eyed girl, looking either as if she were ready to cry with melancholy, or pout from perverseness; instead of which he saw a lovely, graceful creature, with a step elastic with youth and health, and an eye whose clear, intelligent glance, said as plainly as an eye could speak, "What would you with me?" . . . I have no need of you."

He immediately perceived that the amiable child-bewitched

widow had quite misunderstood the young lady's case. . . . It might be, perhaps, from her too tender affection ; but, let the cause be what it would, it was not to solve any professional doubts that he took her delicate hand to feel the "healthful music" of her pulse. Nevertheless, Mr. Pringle, who had seven promising children, knew better than to reject the professed custom of a rich widow who had none ; so, looking at his beautiful patient with much gravity, he said, —

"There is little or nothing, madam, to alarm you. The young lady is rather pale, but I am inclined to believe that it rather proceeds from the naturally delicate tint of her complexion than from illness. It will be proper, however, that I should see her again, and, in an time, I would strongly recommend her taking about one third of a glass of water daily. If more be found necessary, the dose must be increased ; but I am inclined to hope that this will prove sufficient, with the help of a few table-spoonfuls of a mixture by no means disagreeable, my dear young lady which I will not fail to send in." And so saying, Mr. Pringle rose to take leave, but was somewhat puzzled by Agnes saying, with a half smile in which there was something that looked very much as if she were quizzing him, —

"You must excuse me, sir, if I decline taking any medicine whatever till I feel myself in some degree out of health."

Mr. Pringle, who was very near laughing himself, answered with great good humour, "Well then, Mrs. Barnaby, I suppose we must do without it, and I don't think there will be much danger either." He then took his departure, leaving Mrs. Barnaby quite determined that Agnes should drink the water, but not very sorry that she was to have no physic to pay for whilst Agnes was altogether at a loss to guess what this new vagary of her aunt might mean.

"What made you think I was ill, aunt ?" said she.

"Ill ? Who told you, child, that I thought you ill ? I don't think any such thing, but I did not choose you should drink the waters till I had the opinion of the first medical man in the place about it. There is no expense, no sacrifice, Agnes, that I am not ready to make for you."

"But I don't mean to drink the waters at all, thank you, aunt," replied Agnes.

“ Don't mean, miss? . . . you don't mean? . . . And perhaps you don't mean to eat any dinner to-day? and perhaps you don't mean to sleep in my apartment to-night? . . . Perhaps you may prefer walking the streets all night? . . . Pretty language, indeed, from you to me! . . . And now you may take yourself off again, and, as you like to stick to your lessons, you may just go and write for a copy, ' I must do as I'm bid.' ”

Agnes quitted the room in silence, and Mrs. Barnaby prepared to receive her new friend, Miss Morrison, who she doubted not would call before the hour she had named as the fashionable time for repairing to the public library; nor was she at all displeas'd by this abrupt departure, as, for obvious reasons, it was extremely inconvenient for her to have Agnes present when she felt inclined to enter upon a little autobiography. But, while anticipating this agreeable occupation, she recalled, as she set herself to work upon one of her beautiful collars, the scrape she had got into respecting her park, and firmly resolved not even to mention a paddock to Miss Morrison by name, whatever other flights of fancy she might indulge in.

“ This has been no idle day with me as yet,” thought she, as she proceeded with her elegant satin-stitch. . . . “ I have got well stared at, though only in my close straw-bonnet, at the pump-room, — have made a capital new acquaintance, and,” — remembering with a self-approving smile all she had said to Mr. Pringle, — “ I know I have not been sowing seed on barren ground. . . . I have not forgotten how glad my poor dear Barnaby was to get hold of something new. . . . He will repeat it every word, I'll answer for him.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ACQUAINTANCE RIPENS INTO FRIENDSHIP.—USEFUL INFORMATION OF ALL SORTS.—AN EXCELLENT METHOD OF TALKING FRENCH, ATTENDED WITH LITTLE LABOUR AND CERTAIN SUCCESS.—A COLLECTOR.—A SALE-ROOM.—A PEER OF THE REALM.

THE visit of Miss Morrison, which quickly followed, was long and confidential. Mrs. Barnaby very condescendingly explained to her all the peculiar circumstances of her position, which

rendered her the most valuable friend in the world, and also the most eligible match extant for a man of rank and fortune; but all these latter particulars were communicated under the seal of secrecy, never, upon any account, to be alluded to or mentioned to any one; and in return for all this, Miss Morrison gave the widow a catalogue *raisonné* of the most marriageable men at present in Cheltenham, together with the best accounts of their rent-rolls and expectancies that it had been in the power of pertinacious questionings to elicit. But it would be superfluous to narrate this part of the conversation at length, as the person and affairs of many a goodly gentleman were canvassed therein, who, as they never became of much importance to Mrs. Barnaby, can be of none to those occupied by the study of her character and adventures. There were other points, however, canvassed in this interview, which were productive of immediate results; and one of these was the great importance of attending the sales by auction, which, sometimes preluded by soft music, and always animated as they went on by the most elegant conversation, occupied the *beau monde* of Cheltenham for many hours of every day.

"Your descriptions are delightful, Miss Morrison!" exclaimed the animated widow. "I could almost fancy myself there already, . . . and go I will constantly, you may depend upon that; . . . and I want to consult you about another thing, Miss Morrison. . . . There's my niece, you know — the little girl you saw at breakfast . . . do you think it would be quite the thing to make her leave her books and lessons, and all that, to waste her time at the sales? . . . And besides, baby as she is, she gets more staring at than I think at all good for her."

"*Jay non doot paw,*" replied Miss Morrison, "for she is divinely handsome, *say toon bow tay par fit,* as they say at Paris; and my belief is, that if you wish to be the fashion at Cheltenham, the best thing you can do is to let her be seen every day, and all day long. That face and figure must take, *say clare.*"

Mrs. Barnaby fell into a reverie that lasted some minutes. That she did wish to be the fashion at Cheltenham was certain, but the beauty of Agnes was not exactly the means by which she would best like to obtain her wish. She had hoped to depend solely on her own beauty and her own talents, but she was not insensible to the manifest advantage of having two

strings to her bow; and as the ambition, which made her determine to be great, was quite as powerful as the vanity which made her determine to be beautiful, the scheme of making Agnes a partner in her projects of fascination and conquest was at least worthy of consideration.

"I must think about it, Miss Morrison," she replied; "there is no occasion to decide this minute."

"*Poing do too,*" said Miss Morrison; "I always like myself to walk round a thing, as I call it, before I decide to take it. Besides, my dear madam, a great deal depends upon knowing what is your principal object. . . . *Bo coo depong de sell aw.* . . . If you intend to be at all the parties, to be marked with a buzz every time you enter the pump-room, the ball-room, or the sales, I would say, dress up that young lady in the most elegant and attractive style possible, and you will be sure to succeed. . . . *paw le mowymdra doot de sell aw.* . . . But if, on the other hand, your purpose is to marry yourself, *set o tra shews,* and you must act altogether in a different way."

"I understand you, my dear Miss Morrison, perfectly," replied the widow, greatly struck by the sound sense and clear perception of her new friend; "and I will endeavour, with the most perfect frankness, to make you understand all my plans, for I feel sure that you deserve my full confidence, and that nobody can be more capable of giving me good advice. . . . The truth is, Miss Morrison, that I do wish to marry again. My fortune, indeed, is ample enough to afford me every luxury I can wish for; . . . but a widowed heart, my dear Miss Morrison . . . a widowed heart is a heavy load to bear, where the temper, like mine, is full of the softest sensibility and all the tenderest affections. . . . Therefore, as I said, it is my wish to marry again; but God forbid I should be weak and wicked enough to do so in any way unbecoming my station in society,—a station to which I have every right, as well from birth as fortune. No attachment, however strong, will ever induce me to forget what I owe to my family and to the world; and unless circumstances shall enable me rather to raise than debase myself in society, I will never, whatever my feelings may be, permit myself to marry at all."

"*Crowyee moy vous away raisong shate dam!*" exclaimed Miss Morrison.

"Such being the case," resumed the widow, "it appears

to me evident, that the first object to be attended to is the getting into good society; and if, in order to obtain this, I find it necessary to bring forward Agnes Willoughby, it must certainly be done . . . especially as her singing is much more remarkable, I believe, than even the beauty of her person."

"*Et he po-se-ble ?*" said Miss Morrison, joyfully. "Then, in that case, *share a me*, there is nothing in the whole world, of any sort or kind, that can prevent your being sought out and invited to every fashionable house in the place. An ugly girl, that sings well, may easily get herself asked wherever she chooses to go; but a beautiful one, *aveck ung talong samblabel*, may not only go herself, but carry with her as many of her friends as she pleases."

"Really!" . . . said Mrs. Barnaby, thoughtfully. "This is a great advantage: . . . and you feel sure, Miss Morrison, that if I do make up my mind to bring her forward, this will be the case?"

"*O we*," replied her friend confidently, "*set ung fay certain* . . . there is no doubt about it; and if you will, I am ready to make you a bet of five guineas, play or pay, that if you contrive to make her be seen and heard once, you will have your table covered with visiting cards before the end of the week . . . *nong douty paw*."

"Well! . . . we must consider about it, Miss Morrison; . . . but I should like, I think, to go first to some of these crowded places that you talk about without her, just to see . . . that is, if you would be kind enough to go with me."

"Most certainly I will," replied Miss Morrison, "*aveck lephu grang plesire*. . . Suppose we go to the sale-rooms this morning? There is a vast variety of most useful and beautiful things to be sold to-day, and as they always go for nothing, you had better bid a little. It is thought stylish."

"And must certainly draw attention," said Mrs. Barnaby, with vivacity.

"You are quite right . . . *say sa*, . . . and it is just about time to get ready. . . All our gentlemen will be there, you may be sure; and perhaps, you know, some one of them may join us, which is a great advantage, . . . for nothing makes women look so much like nobody as having no man near them . . . As to marriage, I don't think of it for myself . . . *fay pre mung party*; . . . but I confess I do hate to be any where

without the chance of a man's coming to speak to one
mays, eel foh meytra mong shappo o reyvooyr !"

Mrs. Barnaby now found herself at last obliged to confess she did not understand her.

"Of course I know French perfectly," she said; "but as I have never been in the country, and not much in the habit of speaking it, even at home, I cannot always follow you. . . . I would give a great deal, Miss Morrison, to speak the language as beautifully as you do!"

"It is a great assistance in society, certainly," replied Miss Morrison, very modestly; "but I do assure you that it is quite impossible for any body in the world to speak it as I do without being in the country, and taking the same incessant pains as I did. As to learning it from books, it is all nonsense to think of it how in the world is one to get the accent and pronunciation? But I must say that I believe few people ever learned so much in so short a time as I did. I invented a method for myself, without which I should never have been able to speak as I do. I never was without my pencil and paper in my hand, and I wrote down almost every word I heard, in such a manner as that I was always able to read it myself, without asking any body. The English of it all I got easily afterwards, for almost every body understands me when I read my notes according to my own spelling, especially English people; and these translations I wrote down over against my French, which I call making both a grammar and dictionary entirely of my own invention, . . . and I have often been complimented upon it, I assure you."

"And I'm sure you well deserve it. I never heard any thing so clever in my life," replied Mrs. Barnaby. "But how soon shall we begin our walk?"

"Now directly, if you please I will go and put on my hat that was what I said to you in French *Eel foh meytra mong shappo.*"

Mrs. Barnaby then repaired to her toilet; and having done her very utmost to make herself as conspicuously splendid and beautiful as possible, turned to Agnes, who was still writing in her dark corner, and said, "You had better finish what you are about, Agnes, and I hope it is something that will improve you I am going out with Miss Mor-

riason on business . . . and if the evening is fine, I will take you a walk somewhere or other."

Agnes again blessed their rencontre with this valuable new friend, and saw the satin and feathers of her aunt disappear with a feeling of great thankfulness that she was spared the necessity of attending them.

* * * * *

On leaving Mrs. Barnaby, Mr. Alexander Pringle paid a visit to his good friend and patient Lady Elizabeth Norris (the aunt of Colonel Hubert), who, as usual, was passing a few weeks of the season at Cheltenham, as much for the sake of refreshing her spirits by the variety of its company, as for the advantage of taking a daily glass of water at its spring. The worthy apothecary was as useful by the information and gossipings he furnished on the former subject, as by his instructions on the latter, and was invariably called in, the day after her ladyship's arrival, however perfect the state of her health might be; and given, moreover, to understand that a repetition of a professional visit would be expected at least three times a week during her stay.

He now found the old lady sitting alone; for Sir Edward and Lady Stephenson, who were her guests, were engaged in one of their favourite morning expeditions, exploring the beautiful environs of the town, a pleasure which they enjoyed as uninterruptedly as the most sentimental newly-married pair could desire, as, by a strange but very general spirit of economy, few of the wealthy and luxurious visitants of Cheltenham indulge themselves in the expense of a turnpike.

"Soh! Pringle . . . you are come at last, are you?" said Lady Elizabeth . . . "I have been expecting you this hour . . . the Stephensons are off and away again to the world's end, in search of wild flowers and conjugal romance, leaving me to my own devices—a privilege worth little or nothing, unless you can add something new to my list here for next Wednesday."

"Perhaps I may be able to assist your ladyship," returned her Esculapius; "that is, provided Lady Stephenson knows nothing about it, for I fear she has not yet forgiven my introduction of Mr. Myrtle and the two Misses Tonkins."

"Stuff and nonsense! . . . What does it signify, now she is married and out of the way, what animals I get into my

menagerie? But I don't think, Pringle, that you are half such a clever truffle-dog as you used to be What a time it is since you have told me of any thing new!"

"Upon my word, my lady, it is not my fault," replied the apothecary, laughing; "I never see or hear any thing abroad without treasuring it in my memory for your ladyship's service; and I am now come expressly to mention a new arrival at the —, which appears to promise well."

"I rejoice. . . . Is it male or female?"

"Female, my lady, and there are two."

"Of the same species, and the same race?"

"Decidedly not; but the contrast produces a very pleasant effect; and, moreover, though infinitely amusing, they are quite *comme il faut*. I understand the elder lady is sister to Mrs. Peters of Clifton."

Mr. Pringle then proceeded to describe his visit to Mrs. Barnaby, and did justice to the florid style of her beauty, dress, and conversation. But when he came to speak of the young girl who was *vouée au noir*, and of her aunt's pertinacious resolution that she should take the waters and be treated as an invalid, notwithstanding the very excellent state of her health, the old lady rubbed her hands together, and exultingly exclaimed, "Good! admirable! You are a very fine fellow, Pringle, and have hit this off well. Why, man, I saw your delightful widow this morning at the pump, rouge, ringlets, and all; I saw her taste the waters and turn sick; and now, because she must have a reason for showing herself at the pump, she is going to make the poor girl drink for her. . . . Capital creature! I understand it all poor little girl! And so the widow wants acquaintance does she? I offer myself, my drawing-room shall be open to her, Pringle And now, how can I manage to get introduced to her?"

"You will not find that very difficult, Lady Elizabeth, depend upon it. . . . I will undertake to promise for this Mrs. Barnaby, that she will be visible wherever men and women congregate. At the ball, for instance, to-morrow night; does your ladyship intend to be there?"

"Certainly. . . . And if she be there, I will manage the matter of introduction, with or without intervention, and so

obtain this full-blown peony for my show on Wednesday next."

* * * * *

Whilst fate and Mr. Pringle were thus labouring in one quarter of the town to bring Mrs. Barnaby into notice, she was herself not idle in another in her exertions to produce the same effect. The sale-room, to which the experienced Miss Morrison led her, was already full when they entered it; but the little difficulty which preceded their obtaining seats was rather favourable to them than otherwise; for, as if on purpose to display the sagacity of that lady's prognostications, two of the gentlemen who had made part of their company at breakfast, not only made room for them, but appeared well disposed to enter into conversation, and to offer every attention they could desire.

"Mr. Griffiths, if I mistake not," said Miss Morrison, bowing to one of them; "I hope you have been quite well, sir, since we met last year. . . . Give me leave to introduce Mr. Griffiths, Mrs. Barnaby."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance," said the gentleman, bowing low. "Your young friend whom I saw with you this morning is not here. . . . is she?"

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Barnaby, in the most amiable tone imaginable; "the dear girl is pursuing her morning studies at home."

"Introduce me, Griffiths," whispered his companion.

"Mr. Patterson, Mrs. Barnaby; Mr. Patterson, Miss Morrison," and a very social degree of intimacy appeared to be immediately established.

"Oh! what a lovely vase!" exclaimed Mrs. Barnaby.

"What an elegant set of candlesticks!" cried Miss Morrison, as the auctioneer brought forward the articles to be bid for, which being followed by a variety of interesting observations on nearly all the people, and nearly all the goods displayed before them, afforded Mrs. Barnaby such an opportunity of being energetic and animated, that more than one eye-glass was turned towards her, producing that reciprocity of cause and effect which it is so interesting to trace; for the more the gentlemen and ladies looked at her, the more Mrs. Barnaby talked and laughed, and the more Mrs. Barnaby talked and

laughed, the more the gentlemen and ladies looked at her. Flattered, fluttered, and delighted beyond measure, the eyes of the widow wandered to every quarter of the room; and for some time every quarter of the room appeared equally interesting to her; but at length her attention was attracted by the almost fixed stare of an individual who stood in the midst of a knot of gentlemen at some distance, but nearly opposite to the place she occupied.

“Can you tell me, sir, who that tall, stout gentleman is in the green frock-coat, with lace and tassels? . . . That one who is looking this way with an eye-glass.”

“The gentleman with red hair?” returned Mr. Patterson, to whom the question was addressed.

“Yes, that one, rather sandy, but a very fine-looking man.”

“That is Lord Mucklebury, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . He is a great amateur of beauty; and, upon my word, he seems exceedingly taken with some fair object or other in this part of the room.”

The sight of land after a long voyage is delightful . . . rest is delightful after labour, food after fasting; but it may be doubted if either of these joys could bear comparison with the emotion that now swelled the bosom of Mrs. Barnaby. This was the first time, to the best of her knowledge and belief, that she had ever been looked at by a lord at all . . . and what a look it was! . . . No passing glance, no slight unmeaning regard, directed first to one and then to another beauty, but a long, steady, direct, and unshrinking stare, such as might have made many women leave the room, but which caused the heart of Mrs. Barnaby to palpitate with a degree of ecstasy which she had never felt before — no, not even when the most admired officer of a new battalion first fixed his looks upon her in former days, and advanced in the eyes of all the girls to ask her to dance; . . . for no lord *any thing* had ever done so; and thus, the fulness of her new-born joy, while it had the vigorous maturity of ripened age, glowed also with the early brightness of youth. It might indeed have been said of Mrs. Barnaby at that moment, that, “like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, she bore blossom and fruit at once.”

One proof of the youthful freshness of her emotion was the very naïve manner in which it was betrayed. She could not sit still . . . her eyes rose and fell . . . her head turned and

twisted . . . her reticule opened and shut . . . and the happy man who set all this going must have had much less experience than my Lord Mucklebury, if he had not immediately perceived the effect of himself and his eye-glass.

Could Mrs. Barnaby have known at that moment the influence produced by the presence of Miss Morrison, she would have wished her a thousand fathoms deep in the ocean; for certain it is, that nothing but her well-known little quizzical air of unquestionable Cheltenham respectability prevented the noble lord from crossing the room, and amusing himself, without the ceremony of an introduction, in conversing with the sensitive lady, whose bright eyes and bright rouge had drawn his attention to her. As it was, however, he thought he had better not, and contented himself by turning to his ever-useful friend Captain Singleton, and saying in a tone, the familiarity of which failed not to make up for its imperiousness, "Singleton! . . . go and find out who that great woman is in the green satin and pink feathers . . . there's a good fellow."

Mrs. Barnaby did not hear the words, but she saw the mission as plainly as my Lord Mucklebury saw her, and her heart thereupon began to beat so violently, that she had no breath left to demand the sympathy of her friend under circumstances so pregnant with interest. But though she hardly knew where she was, nor what she did, she still retained sufficient presence of mind to mark how the obedient envoy addressed himself (and, alas! in vain) first to one loungee, and then to another, who all replied by a shake of the head, which said with terrible distinctness, "I don't know."

"Gracious heaven, how provoking!" murmured Mrs. Barnaby, as she pressed her delicately-gloved hand upon her heart to still its beating . . . "He will leave the room without finding out my name!" . . . Had she been only a few hours longer acquainted with Mr. Patterson, it is highly probable she would have desired him, if asked by the little gentleman in black, so actively making his way through the crowd, what her name was, just to have the kindness to mention that it was Barnaby. But though very civil, Mr. Patterson was rather ceremonious; and the unsuccessful messenger had returned to his lord, and delivered all the shakes of the head which he had received condensed into one, before she could resolve on so frank a mode of proceeding. For a few mo-

ments longer, however, the amused nobleman continued his fascinating gaze; and then, giving a signal with his eye to Singleton that it was his pleasure to move, that active personage cleared the way before him; and the fat viscount, with his hands in his waistcoat-pockets, stalked out of the room, but not without turning his head, and giving one bold, final, open-eyed, steady look at the agitated widow.

"That man is my fate!" she softly whispered to her soul, as the last frog on the hinder part of his coat had passed from her eye; . . . and then, like the tender convolvulus when the sunbeam that reached it has passed away, she drooped and faded till she looked more like a sleeping picture of Mrs. Barnaby than Mrs. Barnaby herself.

"Do you not find the room very close, Miss Morrison?" said she, after enduring for a minute or two the sort of vacuum that seemed to weigh upon her senses.

"*Poing do too*," replied Miss Morrison, speaking through her nose, which was one method by which she was wont to convey the true Parisian accent, when she desired that it should be particularly perfect . . . "*Poing do too*, Mrs. Barnaby, . . . however, I am quite ready to go if you like it, for I don't think I shall buy any thing this morning, and I don't see many acquaintance here."

Mrs. Barnaby immediately rose; the two civil gentlemen made way for them, and the widow, followed by her friend, walked out a more pensive, though not, perhaps, a less happy woman, than when she walked in.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHELTENHAM BALL.—AN INTRODUCTION.—A CONQUEST.

A GREAT deal of profound meditation was bestowed by Mrs. Barnaby on the occurrences of that morning before the time arrived for the toilet, preparatory to the ball of the succeeding night. All these will show themselves in their results as they arise; and for the present it will be only necessary to mention, that, in providing for this toilet, every thing approaching to

the sordid cares dictated by economy was banished. The time was too short to admit of her ordering a new dress for this occasion ; though the powerful feeling at work within her caused a white satin, decorated in every possible way with the richest blonde, to be bespoken for the next. Every other article that Cheltenham could furnish (and it being the height of the season, Paris itself could hardly do more for her,) every other species of expensive decoration, short of diamonds and pearls, was purchased for this important ball, at which something within her — speaking with the authority of an oracle — declared that she should become acquainted with Lord Muckbury. Busy as were the afternoon and morning which intervened, she found time for the very necessary business of ordering her broker (he had been her father's broker) to sell out five hundred pounds stock for her ; and this done, and her letter safely deposited in the boarding-house letter-bag, she turned her thoughts towards Agnes.

She had certainly, to use her own language when reasoning the point with herself, the very greatest mind in the world not to take her to the ball at all. But this mind, great as it was, was not a settled mind, and was presently shaken by a sort of instinctive consciousness that there was in Agnes, independent of her beauty, a something that might help to give consequence to her *entrée*. "As to her dress," thought she, "I am perfectly determined that it shall be the same she wore at Clifton, . . . not so much on account of the expense . . . at the present moment it would be madness to permit such a consideration to have any effect ; . . . but because it gives her an air more distinguished, more remarkable than any one else ; . . . and besides . . . who knows but that the contrast of style, beautiful as she is, may be favourable to me ? . . . I have not forgotten our fellow-traveller from Silverton . . . she seemed to freeze him. And let her freeze my adorable viscount too, so that I" . . . But here her thoughts came too rapidly to dress themselves in words, and for a few minutes her reverie was rather a tumult than a meditation.

"Yes, she shall go !" she exclaimed at last, rising from the sofa, and collecting a variety of precious parcels, the result of her shopping ; "Yes, she shall go to the ball ; and should any mischief be likely to follow, I will make her go out to service before the end of the week."

Having thus at last come to a determination, and upon reasonings which she felt were not likely to be shaken, she mounted to her sleeping apartment, and after indulging herself by spreading forth various articles of newly-purchased finery upon the bed, she turned to the corner in which Agnes, her tiny table her books, and writing apparatus, were all packed away together in the smallest possible space, and said, "Come here, Agnes . . . you must have done lessons enough for to-day, and I have great news for you. Where do you think I mean to take you to-night?"

Agnes cast her eyes upon the bed, and immediately anticipating some public display of which she was doomed to be a witness, replied in a tone that was any thing but joyful, — "I don't know, aunt."

"I don't know, aunt!" retorted Mrs. Barnaby, indignantly, mimicking her tone. "What an owl of a girl you are, Agnes! . . . Oh, how unlike what I was at the same age! . . . You don't know! . . . I suppose you don't, indeed! There is not another woman under the sun besides myself who would do for a dependant, penniless girl, all I am doing for you. I sacrifice every thing for you . . . my feelings, my health, my money, and yet you look exactly as if I was going to take you to school again, instead of to a ball!"

Agnes sighed; she thought of her last ball — of all its pains and all its pleasures; and feeling but too sure that it was as impossible she should escape the former, as improbable that she should find the latter, she replied mournfully enough, "I would rather not go, if you please, aunt. . . I do not like balls."

"Upon my honour, Agnes, if I had not a temper that was proof against every thing, I should be tempted to box your ears. . . Is it possible to see any thing more disgustingly hypocritical, than a girl of seventeen screwing herself up, and saying, '*I do not like balls.*' . . I wonder what you do like, Miss Prim? But, I promise you, I do not intend to ask your leave for what I do; and as long as you eat my bread, you will do as I bid you . . . or else, turn out, and provide for yourself at once. Let me hear no more such stuff, if you please; but take care to make yourself decent, and be ready to get into the carriage exactly at nine o'clock . . . Do you hear?"

Clifton, . . . and with Colonel Hubert too ; that's her brother, you know. Pray, is he here too ?”

How Agnes trembled as she waited for the answer !

“ I don't know . . . I have not seen him yet,” replied Miss Morrison, “ and it is impossible to overlook him — *set hunc um seuperb ! . . . but comb heel hay fear ! . . .* Perhaps he will come in presently : he is always *ung pow tar* at the balls, for he never dances.”

“ Oh ! I know that,” said Mrs. Barnaby. . . . “ I know him perfectly well, I assure you . . . he is a most elegant person ; but I suspect he is rather of a violent and jealous temper. . . . However, I'm sure I wish he was here, and his friend Frederick Stephenson too. . . . He's a charming young man, and used to walk to Bristol with us, and dance three times a night with Agnes.”

“ Dear me ! you don't say so !” exclaimed Miss Morrison, to whom the intelligence was extremely agreeable, as it removed at once all doubts and fears respecting Mrs. Barnaby's real station in society. . . . “ Well, then, I'm sure you ought to know Lady Elizabeth Norris ; and I really must, somehow or other, contrive to let her hear of your acquaintance with her nephew, Colonel Hubert. They say she dotes upon him, and that he is to be her heir . . . and that's almost a pity, for he has a noble fortune of his own already. Do you happen to know how much his sister had, Mrs. Barnaby ? . . . Some say twenty, some thirty, some fifty thousand.”

“ Young Stephenson never happened to say any thing about it that I recollect,” replied the widow. . . . “ But, look ! Lady Elizabeth is coming this way. . . . You had better step forward, Miss Morrison, that she may see you.”

But there was no occasion for any contrivance on the part of Miss Morrison in order to obtain the notice of Lady Elizabeth ; for that lady having descried and recognised the party, she immediately decided that Miss Morrison, whose acquaintance she had cultivated for several successive seasons, on account of her admirable French, should be for her the medium of introduction to the pompous widow, who was clever enough to make her niece drink the waters instead of herself.

It was, therefore, by a straight and direct line that, supported by the arm of Sir Edward Stephenson, and followed by his lady, she crossed the room from her own place to that

occupied by those whom (in her own particular manner) she delighted to honour.

Miss Morrison's surprise was as great as her satisfaction when she perceived this to be the case; and she felt her triumph doubled by her fine new acquaintance being the witness of it.

"*Bon jour, Miss Morrison,*" said the old lady, holding out her hand; "*toujours en bonne sante jespere ?*"

Amidst smiles and bows, and blushes and courtesies, Miss Morrison replied in her favourite jargon, —

"*Mey we, me lades . . .* and I hope your ladyship is the same."

"A good many old faces here, Miss Morrison, and a good many new ones too. You have friends with you whom I do not remember to have seen before. . . You must introduce me."

This request threw the good-natured spinster into a twitter of delight which almost deprived her of the power of obeying it: first she made a little movement with one hand, and then with the other; while the ample Mrs. Barnaby stood in happy smiling expectation, and the tall, stiff-looking old lady continued gazing at the group through her half-closed eyes, and determined on no account to hasten a process from which she derived so great amusement.

At length the respective names were pronounced in their proper order, that of the blushing Agnes being included. The old lady gave her a look in which something of surprise was mingled with curiosity, and suddenly turning round to Lady Stephenson who stood behind her, she said, —

"Come, Emily, you must be introduced too. . . Miss Willoughby . . . Lady Stephenson."

Mrs. Barnaby had prepared another smile, and another majestic bend for the presentation of herself to the fair bride; but it did not follow; a disappointment for which she was soon consoled by Lady Elizabeth's sitting down, and graciously intimating, by an action of her hand, that the widow might sit beside her.

Agnes meanwhile stood trembling from head to foot with her eyes timidly fixed on the beautiful countenance of Colonel Hubert's sister. As it was quite impossible her ladyship could understand the cause of the agitation she inspired, so *neither was she* at all aware of its strength; but she saw that

the beautiful girl before her, notwithstanding the quiet, un-studied grace of her appearance, was not at her ease, and could only account for it by supposing that she was suffering from extreme shiness. Lady Stephenson had not yet forgotten the time when she, too, had hardly dared to look up unless her paternal brother, as she was wont to call him, stood very near to sustain her carriage, and sympathising with a weakness that was in some degree constitutional in herself, she felt disposed to take more notice of the fair stranger than she usually bestowed upon persons introduced to her by the whimsical caprices of her aunt.

Lady Stephenson was, however, altogether mistaken. . . . Agnes was not at that moment suffering from shiness; there was timidity certainly in the pleasure with which she listened to the voice and gazed at the features of Colonel Hubert's sister; but still it was pleasure, and very nearly the most lively she had ever experienced.

"You are at Cheltenham for the first time, Miss Wiloughby?" said the bride.

"Yes," replied Agnes; "we only arrived two days ago."

There was not much opportunity of indicating feeling of any kind by these words; nevertheless, the manner in which they were spoken, and the sweet expression of the beautiful eyes that were raised to hers, convinced Lady Stephenson that however shy her new acquaintance might be, she greatly liked to be spoken to, and accordingly continued the conversation, which, to her own surprise, warmed so much as it proceeded, that at length her aunt being evidently settled down for an elaborate development of the absurdities, whatever they might be, of her new acquaintance, she offered her arm, inviting her to take a turn round the room.

Could this be real? Was it possible that she was walking round the Cheltenham ball-room on the arm of Colonel Hubert's sister? But though the happy Agnes asked herself this question again and again, neither the asking nor the answering it prevented her bearing her part in a conversation that made her so exquisitely happy with all the pretty earnestness of one interested in every word that was said to her, and too young and fresh-minded to conceal the pleasure she felt.

Lady Stephenson was unexpectedly pleased with her young

companion; there was no mixture of *maiserie* in the simplicity of Agnes; and though her ladyship in no degree shared her aunt's extravagant passion for originals, she had in her own quiet way a reasonably strong liking for whatever appeared to her untainted by affectation. The beauty of Agnes might perhaps have had some share in the pleasure she gave; but certain it is, that, after taking two or three turns together instead of one, and perceiving Lady Elizabeth about to move her quarters in search of fresh amusement, she shook hands with Agnes before parting with her so cordially, that she felt called upon to offer some reason for it to her husband, who had quitted her during her promenade, but was now returned.

"That is by far the most enchanting girl, Edward, in person, mind, and manners, that I ever remember to have met with. . . . How very strange that she should belong to one of my aunt's collection."

"She is vastly beautiful, Emily," replied Sir Edward, "and I suspect that covers a multitude of sins in your eyes; for I observe you never fail to pick out the beauties, go where you will: I declare I think your eyes are infinitely sharper than mine in this way. . . . Having once found out the fairest of the fair, I do not feel so much interest as I used to do in looking about me."

"A very pretty speech, Sir Edward," returned the lady, laughing; "but that sweet girl's beauty is not her greatest fascination. I must ask Lady Elizabeth whether she found the magnificent lady to whom she has been devoting herself answer her expectations."

When this question was put to the old lady, however, she bluntly answered, "No, not at all. . . . She is as dull as a prize-ox decorated with ribands at a fair."

"I am sorry to hear it," observed Lady Stephenson, "for I have lost my heart to the fair girl in black whom she seems to lead about as a contrast to her radiant self. . . . I marvel what the connection can be. . . . It is plain they are not related, from the deep mourning of the one and the rainbow brilliance of the other."

"Your inference is altogether wrong, my Lady Stephenson; . . . one of this Madam Barnaby's long stories was about this melancholy miss, who is her niece, and who will wear mourning in spite of her. . . . I must watch them at the

pump, just to see if the girl makes up for her disobedience in this respect by swallowing the waters, which Pringlé says the aunt is determined she shall take, . . . and after that I shall trouble myself no more about them. . . . The great woman does not answer; she is a vulgar, pompous, every-day bore."

"Pray do not give her quite up, aunt, for my sake," said Lady Stephenson; "for I have set my fancy upon seeing a great deal more of her niece . . . who, by the way, for so pertinacious a mourner, is wonderfully sprightly; . . . but I must flatter myself she found consolation in my society. I must beg you to cultivate the acquaintance a little farther."

"This is something quite new, Emily," replied the old lady. "It is the first time, I believe, that you ever condescended to take any interest in my menagerie . . . Far be it from me, my dear, to check so happy a symptom of an improving intellect . . . I have already asked the expansive widow and her delicate shadow for Wednesday; and if your fever for cementing a friendship with the latter should happen to continue, yield to it by all means . . . You know, Emily, I never wish to control anybody's set of favourites, provided always that nobody interferes with my own."

The only pleasure which the rest of the evening afforded Agnes arose from studying the features, and still more the countenance, of Lady Stephenson, whenever she was fortunate enough to be within sight of her. No one asked her to dance, and no word was uttered within her hearing that gave her the least amusement. One single circumstance cheered the tedious hours during which she was doomed to sit, with her aunt Barnaby before her eyes, in a terror which increased every moment lest she should draw the eyes of every one else in the room upon her. This single circumstance was, that the sister of Colonel Hubert, when standing at three feet of distance from her, turned her head and said, with a smile of strong family affinity to his own, —

"I find that I am to have the pleasure of seeing you on Wednesday at my aunt's, Miss Willoughby . . . I am very glad of it. . . . Good night!" . . . and soon afterwards the party left the room.

Far different was the fate of Mrs. Barnaby. The evening began for her very gloriously, for she had been spoken to by a Lady Elizabeth! but it ended in rapture, . . . for, before its

close, Lord Mucklebury made his appearance, stared at her again with the most marked impertinence, inquired and learned her name from Mr. Pringle, by whom he was at his express desire presented, and finally he placed himself beside her on the sofa, where he remained for at least twenty minutes, talking to her in a style that might be said without the slightest exaggeration to have thrown her into a state of temporary delirium.

Nor had it failed to produce some emotion in the noble lord; nay, it is probable it might have lasted longer, had it amused him less; for when he took his leave of the widow, expressing his hope that he should be happy enough to meet her again, he moved with a step rather quicker than ordinary to ensconce himself among a knot of men who were amusing themselves by communicating to each other the most ludicrous remarks on the company, in a distant corner of the room.

"Have you really torn yourself away from that magnificent specimen of womanhood, Mucklebury?" said one of the group as he approached them. . . . "She is evidently magnetic, by the manner in which you have been revolving round her for some time; and if magnetic, and the power at all proportioned to the volume, it is a miracle that you ever left her side again."

"I never would leave her aside again," replied Lord Mucklebury, laughing immoderately, "did I not fear that I should fall at her feet in a fit. . . . Oh! she is glorious!"

"Who and what is she, in God's name?" said another.

"Who is she? . . . Barnaby! . . . Bless her! — Mistress Barnaby! . . . What is she? . . . A widow . . . Darling creature! . . . a widow, fair, fat, and forty . . . most fat! — most fair! . . . and, oh! a pigeon, a dove, — a very turtle-dove for kindness!"

"She is really handsome, though. . . . isn't she, Mucklebury?" said one.

"Yes, upon my soul she is!" replied the viscount more seriously, "and bears looking at too remarkably well, notwithstanding the pot-full of coarse rouge that it pleases her to carry about on each of her beautiful cheeks."

"And by what blessed chance has your lordship been favoured with an introduction? . . . Or did your lordship so far overcome your constitutional timidity as to introduce yourself?"

"Alarm not your spirit on that score, Digby," replied Lord

Mucklebury. "The medium of introduction was illustrious, . . . but my passion was anterior to it, . . . for the history of our loves was in this wise. It is said of me . . . I know not how truly . . . that my taste in beauty tends somewhat towards the Blowzabella order . . . Be this as it may, it is certain that yesterday morning, between the hours of two and three, being actively employed for the good of myself and my country in Johnson's sale-room, I felt myself penetrated, perforated, pierced, and transfixed by the very bright eyes of this remarkable lady; . . . whereupon, overpowering my constitutional timidity, Digby, I fixed my regards, eye-glass and all, upon her; . . . but the result was astonishing . . . Did any of you, gentlemen, ever happen to watch the effect of the sun's rays when thrown upon some soft substance (a pound of butter for example) through the medium of a burning-glass? . . . Such and so great was that produced by the rays of my right eye when sent through my eye-glass upon this charming creature . . . She warmed, trembled, yea, visibly melted under it. I inquired her name on the spot, but in vain. This evening I have been more successful, and now I have the inexpressible felicity of being enrolled as an acquaintance of this inimitable widow."

"A very interesting narrative," said one of his auditors; "and may I ask your lordship what it can be that has now induced you to leave her fair side all unguarded?"

"Ecstasy, Tom! . . . I had not strength to witness the emotions I inspired. . . I tell you, I must have fallen at her feet had I continued near her."

* * * * *

The conversation of these merry gentlemen went on for some time longer in the same strain, forming a contrast, perhaps not very uncommon, to the solemn and serious meditations of Mrs. Barnaby on the very same circumstances which caused their mirth. Far, however, from exaggerating the effect he had produced, Lord Mucklebury had little or no idea of its strength and reality. He fancied the lady inflammable, and easily touched by any appearance of admiration; but it never entered his head to suppose that his flourishing speeches and audacious eyes had given birth in her mind to the most sanguine hope, and the most deliberate intention, of becoming Viscountess Mucklebury.

Sudden as the formation of these hopes and intentions may appear, it would be doing injustice to Mrs. Barnaby were the reader suffered to believe that they were permitted to her possession of her heedlessly. She remembered Major Alla . . . she remembered the agony of the moment in which she beheld his friend Maintry appear in the character of a thief; and sweet to her ears as was the title of her new conquest, she did not suffer it to charm away her resolution of discovering whether he were poor or rich. Every inquiry tended to prove that she was safe in the direction which her ambition and her love had now taken. Lord Mucklebury was a widower, with an only son very nobly provided for, and as capable of making a good jointure, if he married again, as a widow's heart could wish.

Now then all that remained to be done was to foster the admiration she had inspired into a passion strong enough to induce the noble viscount to settle that jointure upon her. Nothing could be more just than her reasoning—nothing more resolute than her purpose. She knew she was handsome, she felt it to be advisable that she should appear rich; and with the devoted feeling of a warrior who throws away his scabbard as he rushes to the onslaught, Mrs. Barnaby heroically set herself to win her way to victory — *coûte qui coûte*.

CHAPTER XV.

NEW HOPES BEGET A NEW STYLE OF EXISTENCE. — A PARTY. — AGNES HAS SOME SUCCESS, WHICH MRS. BARNABY DOES NOT QUITE APPROVE. — LORD MUCKLEBURY ENTERS INTO EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE WIDOW, BY WHICH HER HOPES ARE RAISED TO THE HIGHEST PITCH. — BUT LORD MUCKLEBURY LEAVES CHELTENHAM.

LORD MUCKLEBURY was a gay man in every sense of the word. He loved a jest almost as well as a dinner, and would rather have been quoted as the sayer of a good thing than as the doer of a great one. He had enjoyed life with fewer drawbacks from misfortune than most men; and having reached the age of forty, had made up his mind, as soberly as he could do on any subject, that the only privilege of the

aristocracy worth valuing was the leisure they enjoyed, or might enjoy if they chose it, for amusing themselves. Nature intended him for a good-tempered man, but fun had spoiled him ; having laughed with every body for the first twenty years of his life, he learned during the second that it was a better joke still to laugh at them ; and accordingly, the principal material for the wit on which his reputation rested, was derived, at the time Mrs. Barnaby made his acquaintance, from an aptitude to perceive the absurdities of his fellow-creatures, and a most unshrinking audacity in exposing them.

Having pointed out Mrs. Barnaby to a set of his clever friends as the joke in which he meant to indulge during the three or four weeks of Cheltenham discipline to which he annually submitted, it became necessary to his honour that he should prove her to be ridiculous enough to merit the distinction ; and he knew well enough that all she required to make her perfect in this line was as much nonsense from himself as would keep her vanity afloat. The occupation suited him exactly ; it threatened little fatigue, and promised much amusement ; so that by the time Mrs. Barnaby had made up her mind to win and wear his lordship's coronet, he had decided with equal sincerity of purpose to render her the jest of the season to his Cheltenham acquaintance.

An hour's close examination of Miss Morrison concerning the *manière d'être* of the *beau monde* during the season sufficed to convince the widow that, expensive as the boarding-house had appeared to her, it was far from being all that was necessary for her present purpose. She must have a carriage,—she must have a tall footman,—she must have a smart lady's maid ;—and great was the credit due to the zeal and activity of this invaluable friend for the promptitude and despatch with which these indispensable articles were supplied. Some idea of this may be gathered from the fact, that the carriage which conveyed them to the house of Lady Elizabeth Norris was one hired, horses, coachman, and all, for the season ; while the first applicant of six feet high who appeared, in consequence of the earnest requisition for such an individual made at half-a-dozen different shops, followed the widow in a full suit of livery the following Sunday to church.

Agnes looked on at first with wonder, which a little reflection converted into great misery. She knew absolute

nothing as to the amount of her aunt's fortune ; but there was a wild heedlessness of expense in her present manner of proceeding that, despite her ignorance, made her tremble for the result. The idea that she might, by persevering industry, render herself fit to become a governess, was that which mortended to console her ; but Agnes's estimate of what was required for this was a very high one ; and greatly did she rejoice to find that her aunt permitted her to be wholly mistress of her time, seldom inviting her to go out, and receiving her apologies for declining to do so with a degree of complacency which plainly enough showed they were not unwelcome.

Lady Elizabeth Norris's party was five days after the ball ; and before it arrived Mrs. Barnaby had persuaded herself into the firmest possible conviction of Lord Mucklebury's devoted attachment and honourable intentions. Had his lordship not been one of the invited guests, Mrs. Barnaby would unquestionably have given up the engagement, though but a few short days before it had appeared to her very like a permission to enter the gates of paradise ; but her estimate of all things was changed ; she was already a viscountess in all her reasonings, and perhaps the only person who held an unchanged value was the poor Agnes, whose helpless dependance could not place her in a position of less consideration than it had done before.

"Pray, Miss Agnes, is it your pleasure to go to Lady Elizabeth Norris's this evening?" said Mrs. Barnaby, while watching her new maid's assiduous preparations for her own toilet.

"Oh, yes, aunt, if you have no objection. . . . I should like to go very much indeed."

"Nay, child, you may go if you wish it. . . . I imagine it will prove but a humdrum sort of thing. . . . Wear the same dress that you did at the ball. . . . My maid shall arrange your hair for you."

Yet notwithstanding all this increase of dignity, Agnes never for a moment guessed what was going on ; she had never seen Lord Mucklebury excepting at the ball, and her imagination had not suggested to her the possibility that so casual an acquaintance could be the cause of all she saw and heard.

Had Agnes been as light-hearted as when she used to sit upon her travelling trunk in her closet at Clifton, listening to the lively gossip of her friend Mary, the party at Lady Eliza-

beth's would have been pregnant with amusement. But as it was, she sat very sadly alone in a corner ; for during the first portion of the evening Sir Edward Stephenson and his lady were not present, having dined out, where they were detained much beyond the hour at which the majority of Lady Elizabeth's guests assembled.

But the lively old woman wanted no one to assist her in the task of entertaining her company, for in truth she was not particularly anxious about their entertainment, her sole object in bringing them all together being to amuse herself, and this she achieved in a way less agreeable, perhaps, to one who, like Agnes, was a mere passive spectator, than to those who were expected to take a more active part. During the early part of the evening, few persons appeared excepting such as she had expressly desired to come early, and there was not one of these undistinguished by some peculiarity from which the whimsical old lady derived amusement.

It was her custom to place herself immovably in a huge arm-chair, with a small table before her, on which was placed her tea, coffee, ice, biscuits, or any thing else she might choose, with quite as little ceremony as if alone. A book or two also, with a pair of wax lights having a green shade over them, never failed to make part of the preparation for her evening's amusement, and to these she never scrupled to address herself, if "her people" proved less entertaining than she expected.

Every one as they entered approached this throne to pay their compliments, and then seated themselves at some distance, one single chair alone being permitted to stand near her. To this place all those whom she wished to listen to were called in succession, and dismissed when she had had enough of them, with the same absence of all ordinary civility as she was sure to display to all those who were so ill-advised as to appear at her unceremonious bidding.

Both her nephew and niece had often remonstrated with her on the subject of these strange *réunions* ; but she defended herself from the charge of behaving rudely to those who, in accepting her invitations, had a right to expect civility, by saying, "I am as civil as they deserve. My title is the '*Duo ad me*' that calls fools into my circle, and till I cease to be Lady Elizabeth, they get what they come for."

For the most part, the company were rather odd-looking than elegant, and the newly-awakened grandeur of Mrs. Barnaby was a little wounded by observing how few persons there were present whose dress entitled them to the honour of meeting her and her dress. Lady Elizabeth, moreover, received her very coldly, though to Agnes she said, "How d'ye do, my dear? Lady Stephenson will be here presently."

"What vulgar ignorance!" thought the widow, as she retreated to a sofa commanding a perfect view of the door by which the company entered. . . . "Notwithstanding her title, that woman must have been wretchedly brought up . . . Should I in my second marriage be blessed with offspring, I shall make it my first object to teach them manners befitting their rank."

The absurdities of Lady Elizabeth's guests on this evening were not sufficiently piquant to justify a detailed description. . . . One old gentleman was summoned to THE chair that he might recount how many habitual drunkards, both male and female, he had converted into happy water-drinkers by the simple process of making them take an oath; another amused her ladyship for several minutes by what she called "*saying his peerage*," — that is, by repeating a catalogue of noble names, all of which he stated to belong to his most familiar friends. One lady was had up for the purpose of repeating her own poetry; and another that she might, by a little prompting, give vent to some favourite metaphysical doctrine, which it was her *forte* to envelope in words of her own construction. Miss Morrison, too, was courted into talking of Paris in her own French; but altogether the meeting was not successful, and Lady Elizabeth was in the act of arranging the shade of her lights, so as to permit her reading at her ease, when her eye, as she looked round the room, chanced to fall upon Agnes. She was on the point of calling to her by name; but there was a modest tranquillity in her delicate face, that the imperious old lady felt no inclination to startle, and instead of speaking to her, she addressed her aunt.

"Pray, Mrs. Barnaby, does your young lady play or sing? We are mighty drowsy, I think, to-night, all of us; and if she does, I should be really much obliged if she will favour us. Lady Stephenson's instrument is a very fine one."

Mrs. Barnaby was so little pleased by her reception, and so

completely out of sorts at the non-arrival of Lord Mucklebury, that she answered as little graciously as it was well possible, "I don't think there is any chance of her amusing your ladyship."

Great was the widow's surprise when she saw the quiet un-presuming Agnes rise from her distant chair, walk fearlessly across the circle to that of Lady Elizabeth, and heard her say in a low voice, but quite distinctly, —

"I do sing and play a little, Lady Elizabeth; and if it be your ladyship's wish that I should make the attempt now, I shall be happy to obey you."

Perhaps Lady Elizabeth was as much surprised as Mrs. Barnaby; but though she understood not the feeling that had prompted this wish to oblige her, she was pleased by it, and rising for the first time that evening from her chair, she took Agnes by the arm, and led her to the piano-forte.

"Does your ladyship love music?" said Agnes, trembling at her own temerity, but longing irresistibly to be noticed by the aunt of Colonel Hubert.

"Yes, my dear, I do indeed," replied the old lady. "It is one of our family failings, — I believe we all love it too well."

"Which does your ladyship prefer, old songs or new ones?" said Agnes.

"Old ones most decidedly," she replied. "But at your age, my dear, and in the present state of musical science, it is hardly likely you should be able to indulge my old-fashioned whim in this respect."

"My practice has been chiefly from the old masters," replied Agnes, turning over the leaves of a volume of Handel.

"Say you so, my little girl? . . . Then I will sit by you as you play."

The delighted Agnes, wondering at her own audacious courage, assiduously placed a chair for the old lady, and with a flutter at her heart that seemed almost like happiness, turned to the song that she had seen produce on Colonel Hubert an effect never to be forgotten. It had brought tears to the eyes of the gallant soldier, and given to his features such dangerous softness, that the poor minstrel had never recovered the effects of it. To sing it again to the ear of his aunt was like coming back towards him; and the alleviation this brought to the terrible fear of having lost sight of him for ever, not only

gave her the courage necessary to bring her to the place as now occupied, but inspired her with animation, skill, and power, to sing with a perfection she had never reached before.

The pleased attention of Lady Elizabeth had been given in the first instance to reward the ready effort made to comply with her wishes; but long before the song was ended, she had forgotten how she had obtained it, had forgotten every thing save her own deep delight, and admiration of the beautiful siren who had caused it. Silent and motionless she waited till the last chord of the concluding symphony had died away; and then rising from her chair she bent down over Agnes, and having gazed earnestly in her face for a moment, kissed her fair forehead once, twice, and again with a cordiality that thanked her better than any words could have done.

Agnes was greatly touched, greatly gratified, and forgetting the inexpediency of giving way to feelings that it was neither possible nor desirable should be understood, she seized the good lady's hand, pressed it to her bosom, and looking up to her with eyes swimming in tears of joy, said in a voice of deep feeling, . . . "I am so very glad you like me!"

"Why, what a precious little creature you are!" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth, half aroused and half softened; "as original to the full as any of my queer company here, and quite as remarkable for sweetness and talent as they for the want of them. . . . Where did you grow, fair lily-flower? . . . And how came you to be transplanted hither by so But never mind all this now; if we get on well together we shall get better acquainted. What shall I call you, pretty one?"

"Agnes, if you please, Lady Elizabeth Agnes Wilmoughby," replied the happy girl, becoming every moment more delighted at the result of the bold measure she had taken.

"You must come to me to-morrow morning, Agnes, while I am at breakfast, at ten o'clock remember, for then I am alone. . . . And you must come prepared, my child, to talk to me about yourself for I can't understand it at all and I never choose to be puzzled longer than I can help it upon any subject. . . . But listen to my monsters! If they are not presuming to be noisy behind my back!

Then lull me, lull me, charming air,
My senses wrap in wonder sweet.
Like snow on wool thy footsteps are,
Soft as a spirit's are thy feet,"—

exclaimed the old lady in a whisper close to the ear of Agnes. . . . 'Sing to me again, my child, and I will send a message to them in words borrowed from the famous epitaph on Juan Cabeca, . . . 'Hold your tongues, ye calves!'" . . . and turning herself round she beckoned to a servant who had just entered with refreshments, saying to him in a voice which might have been heard by most of those in the apartment. "Set down the tray, Johnstone; nobody wants it; . . . and go round the room, begging they will all be silent while this lady sings."

It was in the middle of the song which followed that Sir Edward and Lady Stephenson returned. The door opened without Agnes being aware of it; and her rich voice swelling to a note at the top of its compass, and sustaining it with a power given to few, filled the chamber with a glorious volume of sound that held Colonel Hubert's sister transfixed as she was about to enter. Unconscious that there was another of the race near her, whom she would have almost breathed her soul away to please, Agnes warbled on, nor raised her eyes from the page before her till the strain was ended. Then she looked up and perceived Lady Stephenson, who had noiselessly crept round to ascertain whom the gifted minstrel might be, immediately opposite, and looking at her with a most gratifying expression of surprise and pleasure. A very cordial greeting and shaking of hands followed; while Lady Elizabeth, her hand resting on her new favourite's shoulder, said almost in a whisper,—

"Who would have thought, Emily, that I should come at last to take lessons from you as to the selection of my natural curiosities? . . . But you have made a hit that does you immortal honour . . . this little singing bird is worth all the monsters I ever got together. . . . Your ladyship need not look so grave, however," she added, in a voice still lower. "I do not intend to treat her as if she were stolen from the Zoological Gardens. . . . She is to come to me to-morrow morning, and then we shall know all about her . . . I wish your fastidious brother were here! . . . Do you remember what he said the other day about some miss he had heard at Clifton? I fancy we might have a chance of correcting his outrageous judgment concerning her. . . . What think you?"

Lady Stephenson answered by expressing the most cordial admiration of Agnes's voice, but added, . . . "There are many

Barnaby? . . . Did I not tell you, my dear madam, that you need do nothing but make this young lady sing in order to become the fashion at Cheltenham? . . . You have no idea what a number of visits you will have to-morrow. . . . *Noe verong.*"

"Really, Miss Morrison," replied the widow, tartly, "I am surprised to hear a person of your good sense speak so foolishly. . . . How can you suppose that a person in my station of life could desire the visits of such a set of people as we met to-night? . . . And as to making this poor penniless girl talked of as a singer, I should be ashamed to think of such a thing. Remember, miss, if you please, that from this time forward I never will permit you to sing again, . . . unless, indeed, you mean to get your bread by it, . . . and I'm sure I wo'n't undertake to say but what you may want it. . . . I can answer for nobody but myself; and I don't think it probable that others may be inclined to show the same devoted generosity that I have done to a girl that never showed the slightest affection for me in return."

And so she ran on till she fell asleep . . . but her words fell like rain on a water-proof umbrella; they made a noise, but they could not reach the head which they seemed destined to deluge. Agnes was wrapped in armour of proof, and nothing could do her harm.

Happily for her, one of the facetious Lord Mucklebury's modes of extracting amusement from the widow was by writing her notes, which elicited answers that often threw him into a perfect ecstasy, and which he carefully preserved in an envelope endorsed "Barnaby Papers," lodging them in a corner of his writing-desk, from whence they were not unfrequently drawn for the delectation of his particular friends. One of these notes, intended to produce an answer that should add a gem to his collection, was delivered to Mrs. Barnaby as she passed from the breakfast-table of the boarding-house to her own sitting-room. The emotions produced by these notes were always very powerful, and on the present occasion more so than ordinary, for there were apologies for not appearing last night, and hopes for an interview that morning, which were to be answered instantly, for the servant waited.

Mrs. Barnaby, panting with haste and gladness, seated herself at her table, opened her writing-desk, seized a pen, and

was in the very act of venturing the words "My dear Lord!" when Agnes drew near and said, "May I go out, aunt, a call on Lady Elizabeth?"

"Gracious Heaven! . . . what a moment to torment me! Go! . . . go where you will . . . plague of my life as you are! Get a long at once, can't you?"

Agnes vanished, — a Barnaby paper was written; and while the niece was enjoying three hours of the most flattering and delightful intercourse with the nearest relations of Colonel Hubert, the aunt, with a degree of felicity hardly less perfect, was receiving a *tête-à-tête* visit from Lord Mucklebury, in which he as carefully studied her looks, attitudes, and words, as if their effect on him were all she believed them to be. No did either interview pass without producing some important results. His lordship carried away with him wherewithal to keep half-a-dozen of his friends who dined with him on that day in a continued roar for nearly an hour. . . . Mrs. Barnaby was left with a sweet assurance that all was going well, which led to the purchase of a richly-laced mantelet and a new bonnet. . . . while Agnes, inspired by so strong a wish to please as to make her follow the lead of her new friends, and converse with them of all her little history just as they wished to make her, created in them both an interest too strong to be ever forgotten, and she left them with a confidence in their kindness that made her endure much subsequent suffering with firmness; for it was long ere she wholly lost the hope that they might meet again in future years.

During the next fortnight this agreeable intercourse was very frequently repeated; for there were few hours of the day in which Mrs. Barnaby was not in some way or other so occupied by the sentiment that engrossed her, either by the presence of its object, or the anticipation of his presence, or meditation upon it when it was passed, that she was well pleased to have Agnes out of the way; and Lady Elizabeth and her charming niece were, on the contrary, so well pleased to have her, that scarcely a day passed without some hours of it being devoted to them.

Lady Stephenson in particular seemed to study her character with peculiar attention. There was a fond devotion in the gratitude which their kindness had produced that could not be mistaken, and which, from one so artless and so every way in-

teresting, could not fail of producing affection in return. From such a friend it was impossible for Agnes to conceal, even if she had wished it, that her home was a very wretched one; and they often conversed together on the possibility of her releasing herself from it by endeavouring to obtain some sort of independence by her own exertions. Lady Elizabeth was repeatedly a party in these consultations, but uniformly gave it as her opinion that any home was better for such a girl as Agnes, than an attempt to support herself, which must inevitably expose her to a degree of observation more dangerous than any annoyance from her aunt Barnaby. Agnes by no means clearly understood the grounds upon which this sturdy opposition to her wishes was founded; and as Lady Stephenson, who seemed more able to sympathise with her actual sufferings, listened without venturing to answer these mysterious threatenings of something remote, she at length took courage herself and said,

“Will you tell me, dear Lady Elizabeth, what it is you think would happen to me if I went into a family as a governess?”

“You are a little fool, Agnes,” replied the old lady, unable to repress a smile; “but as I do really believe that your ignorance is genuine, I will tell you. . . . Don’t be frightened, my poor child; but the fact is, that you are a great deal too handsome for any such situation.”

Agnes blushed instantly a most celestial rosy red, and felt shocked and ashamed at having drawn forth such an answer; but, though she said nothing in reply, she at once decided that Lady Elizabeth Norris should never have reason to believe that she was capable of neglecting her friendly caution. All hopes from her power of teaching ended for ever, and the next time her aunt Barnaby was particularly cross (which happened that night while they were undressing to go to bed), Agnes very seriously began to revolve in her altered mind the possibility of learning so late in life the profitable mystery of satin-stitch.

Once, and once only, during the many hours Agnes passed with his relations, did she venture to pronounce the name of Colonel Hubert. She had often determined to do it, but had never found courage and opportunity till one morning, after an hour or two passed in singing duets with his sister, Lady

Elizabeth again alluded to the *Clifton* *miss* that her nephew had so vaunted, and whose voice must, she was sure, be immeasurably inferior to that of Miss Willoughby.

It was under cover of this observation that Agnes ventured to say, "I knew Colonel Hubert a little when I was at Clifton."

"Did you?" said the old lady, briskly; "then I'll bet my life he heard you sing."

"Once or twice he did."

"Oh! hah! that explains it all. . . . You need not blush so about it, my dear: why did you not tell me so at once?"

"I do not think it is quite certain," returned Agnes, attempting to smile, "that Colonel Hubert spoke of me."

"Don't you, my dear? but I do, and I know him but, I suppose. . . . And what was it you sang to him, Agnes?"

Agnes mentioned the songs; but her voice trembled so, that she grievously repented having brought on herself questions that she found it so difficult to answer.

Her embarrassment was not greatly relieved by perceiving, — when at length she looked up to save herself from the awkwardness of pertinaciously looking down, — that the eyes of Lady Stephenson were earnestly fixed upon her.

"Did you ever see Frederick Stephenson with my brother?" said her ladyship: "they were at Clifton together this summer. . . . Perhaps you don't know that I was married there, Agnes? and Sir Edward and I left our two brothers there together."

This change of subject was a considerable relief; and Agnes answered with tolerable composure, — "Oh yes! I did know you were married there, for I heard it mentioned several times; and I saw you too, Lady Stephenson, the evening before you were married, walking up and down Houcester Row, with with your brother."

"Did you, indeed? Were you walking there, Agnes?"

"No we were at the drawing-room window, and my aunt made me look out to see your brother."

"Why particularly to see my brother?" inquired Lady Stephenson, with a smile.

"Because because he was so tall, I believe," replied

Agnes, looking considerably more silly than she had ever done in her life.

“And so you watched us walking up and down, did you, Agnes?”

“Yes, once or twice,” answered Agnes, again blushing violently.

“And did you hear what we said, my dear?” — “No! . . . but I am sure it was something very interesting, you seemed to be talking so earnestly.”

“It was very interesting . . . it was about Frederick. . . You knew him too, did not you?” — “Oh yes! . . . very well.”

“Really! . . . I wonder you never told me so before.”

It was impossible to look at Agnes at this moment, as Lady Stephenson now looked at her, without perceiving that there must be some cause for the agitation she evinced. It immediately occurred to her that it was likely enough Frederick might have laid his heart at her feet, or perhaps stopped short before he did so from the effect of that very conversation of which Agnes had been an eye, though not an ear, witness.

“Poor little thing!” . . . thought Lady Stephenson; “if this be so, and if she has given her young heart in return, how greatly is she to be pitied!”

No sooner had this idea struck her, which many trifling circumstances tended to confirm, than Lady Stephenson determined to drop the subject for ever; and much as Agnes secretly but tremblingly wished it, no allusion was ever made to the two gentlemen again.

* * * * *

Days and weeks rolled on, till the time fixed by Lord Mucklebury for his departure arrived. His collection of the Barnaby papers was quite as copious as he wished it to be; and having indulged himself and his friends with as many good stories as any one lady could be the heroine of, without being fatiguing, he parted with the widow on Saturday evening, assuring her, with a thousand expressions of passionate admiration, that he should be early on the walks to look for her on the morrow, and by noon on Sunday was on his road to London behind four galloping post horses.

During the whole of that fatal Sunday Mrs. Barnaby roared

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. BARNABY LOSES HER SENSES, AND RECOVERS THEM.—SHE TAKES A DESPERATE RESOLUTION.—MISS MORRISON PROVES HERSELF A FRIEND IN NEED.—AGNES FINDS CONSOLATION IN SORROW.

MRS. BARNABY'S horror on recovering her senses (for she really did fall into a swoon) was in very just proportion to the extent of the outlay her noble vision had cost her. To Miss Morrison, who had listened to all her hopes, she scrupled not to manifest her despair, not, however, entering into the financial part of it, but leaving it to be understood by her sympathising friend, that her agony proceeded wholly from disappointed love.

"What a Lovelace! . . . what a Lothario! . . . what a finished deceiver! . . . *Kel oreur!* . . ." exclaimed the pitying spinster . . . "And how thankful ought I to be that no man can ever again cause me such terrible emotion . . . *Nong jammy!*"

"Gracious Heaven! what is to become of me?" cried Mrs. Barnaby, apparently but little consoled by this assurance of her friend's exemption from a similar misfortune; "what ought I to do, Miss Morrison? . . . If I set off instantly for London, do you think I could reach it before he leaves it for Rome?"

Miss Morrison, having turned to the newspaper, examined its date, and read the fatal paragraph again, replied, "You certainly could, my dear Mrs. Barnaby, if this statement be correct; but I would not do it, if I were you, without thinking very seriously about it . . . It is true I never had a lord for a lover myself, but I believe when they run restive, they are exceedingly difficult to hold; and if you do go after him, and fail at last to touch his cruel heart, you will be only worse off than you are now . . . *Say clare!*"

"That may be all very true in one sense, Miss Morrison,"

replied the unhappy widow ; " but there is such a thing as pursuing a man lawfully for breach of promise of marriage, and . . . though money is no object to me . . . I should glory in getting damages from him, if only to prove to the world that he is a scoundrel ! "

" That is quite another thing, indeed, " said the confidant, " *toot a fay* ; and, if you mean to bring an action against him, I am pretty sure that I could be very useful to you ; for my brother is an attorney in London, and is reckoned particularly clever about every thing of the kind. But have you any proof, my dear lady ? . . . that is what my brother will be sure to say to you . . . I know you have had lots of letters ; and if you have kept them all, it is most likely my brother may find out something like proof . . . *Eel ay see abee!* "

" Proof ? . . . To be sure I have proof enough, if that's all that's wanted ; and I'll go to your brother at once, Miss Morrison, for revenge I'll have . . . if nothing else. "

" Then of course you'll take all his love-letters with you, Mrs. Barnaby ; and I think, if you would let me look over them, I should be able to tell you whether they would answer the purpose or not. — *Jay me coney ung pew.* "

" I should have no objection in the world to your seeing them every one, " replied the outraged lady ; . . . " but I am thinking, Miss Morrison, that I have an immense deal of business to do, and that I shall never get through it without your friendly help . . . I am thinking. . . . "

And Mrs. Barnaby was thinking, and very much to the purpose too. She was thinking, that though she had squandered about seventy or eighty pounds in trifling purchases, by far the greater part of the expenses her noble lover had induced her to run into were still in the shape of debts, the money with which she proposed to discharge them being as yet paying her interest in the funds. Could she contrive to leave the heaviest of these debts unpaid till she knew the result of her intended attack upon Lord Mucklebury's purse, it would be very convenient. Perhaps some vague notion that she, too, might visit the Continent, and thus escape the necessity of paying them at all, might mix itself with her meditations ; but at any rate she very speedily decided upon leaving Cheltenham the following day without mentioning her intention to her milliner, mercer, tailor, shoemaker, hosier, per-

fumer, livery-stable keeper, librarian, or even to her hair-dresser. If she got damages, she should certainly return and pay them all with great *éclat*; if not . . . circumstances must decide what it would be most advisable for her to do.

Great as was her esteem and affection for Miss Morrison, she did not think it necessary to trouble her with all these trifling details, but resumed the conversation by saying, —

“ Yes, my dear Miss Morrison, I am thinking that the best thing I can do will be to go to London for a day or two, see your brother, put all my documents into his hands, and then return to Cheltenham for the remainder of the season, for I am sure I should be more likely to recover my spirits in your friendly society than any where else.”

“ Indeed I approve your resolution altogether,” replied Miss Morrison; “ and I will write a line by you to my brother, telling him that whatever he does to assist you, I shall take as a personal favour to myself.”

“ I cannot thank you enough!” said the widow, pressing her hand . . . “ We shall be able to get every thing ready to-night I hope; and when my coachman comes as usual for orders at eleven o’clock to-morrow morning, tell him, my dear friend, to drive you about wherever you like to go. . . . And you may mention, if you please, that I shall want him to take us a long drive on Saturday to see the Roman Pavement I mean to return on Friday night for what will be the use, you know, of my staying in town?”

“ None in the world but I think you had better name Monday for the drive for fear you should be too tired on Saturday.”

“ Well, just as you please about that but you had better go and write your letter, and I’ll speak to Agnes and my maid about packing.”

“ Perhaps you will not like to take Miss Willoughby I will take the greatest care of her, if you will leave her in my charge.”

“ How very kind! But I would rather take her I can’t do without somebody to lace my stays and fasten my dress, and I want my maid to finish the work she is about. . . . She is an exquisite darning, and I have set her to mend the rent that hateful Lord Mucklebury made in my India muslin So I don’t mean to take her.”

* * * * *

Nothing of any kind occurred to interfere with the execution of this hastily, but by no means unskilfully, imagined plan. The ready-money expenditure of Mrs. Barnaby had been so lavish, that she had bought golden opinions from master, mistress, men, and maids throughout the establishment; and when she summoned Mr. —, the landlord, to her presence, and informed him that she was going to London for a couple of days on business, but should not give up her rooms, as she should take neither of her servants with her, he received the communication with great satisfaction, and promised that no one but her own people should enter her drawing-room till her return.

This preliminary business happily settled, Mrs. Barnaby mounted the stairs to her bed-room, where, as usual, she found Agnes busily occupied in her corner, the hour for an evening engagement made with Lady Stephenson not having yet arrived.

For some reason or other Mrs. Barnaby never enjoyed any flirtation so much in the presence of Agnes as without her; and it was for this reason that at Cheltenham, as well as at Clifton, she had encouraged her making acquaintance for herself; thus her constant intercourse with Lady Elizabeth Norris and Lady Stephenson had never in any degree been impeded by her aunt.

Mrs. Barnaby was aware that Agnes had engaged to pass this evening with them; and when she looked at her tranquil face as she entered the room she felt greatly disposed to plague her by saying that she must stay at home to pack, and could not go. . . . But a moment's reflection suggested to her that the less fuss she made about this packing the better, and therefore only told her that she was obliged to set off by seven o'clock the next morning for London, on business that would detain her for a day or two . . . that she meant to take her, and leave her maid; and that before she set off upon her gossiping visit, it would be necessary to pack her trunk.

Agnes laid down her book, and looked surprised.

"Don't stare so like a fool, Agnes. . . . Do what I bid you instantly."

"There will be no occasion for me to pack much, aunt, if we are only to stay a day or two," said Agnes.

"When I tell you to pack your trunk, miss, I mean that

your trunk shall be packed, and I wo'n't trouble you to give me any opinion on the subject."

"Am I to put every thing into it, aunt?"

"Plague of my life, yes!" replied Mrs. Barnaby, whose vexed spirit seemed to find relief in speaking harshly.

Without further remonstrance Agnes set about obeying her; and the little all that formed her mourning wardrobe was quickly transferred from the two drawers allowed her to the identical trunk which aunt Betsy had provided for her first journey from Silverton to Empton.

"And my books, aunt?" . . . said Agnes, fixing her eyes on the heated countenance of the widow with some anxiety.

Mrs. Barnaby hesitated, and Agnes saw she did. It was not because the little library of her niece formed the chief happiness of her life that she scrupled at bidding her leave them behind, but because she suspected that they, and their elegant little case, were of some marketable value . . . "You may take them if you will," she said at length. . . . "I don't care a straw what you take or what you leave . . . only don't plague me. . . . You must know, I suppose, if you are not quite an idiot, that when people go to London on business, it is possible they may stay longer than they expect."

Agnes asked no more questions, but quietly packed up every thing that belonged to her; and when the work, no very long one, was completed, she said,—

"Can I be of any use to you, aunt, before I go out?"

"I should like to know what use you are ever likely to be of to anybody," . . . was the reply. "Take yourself off, in God's name! — the sooner the better."

The very simple toilet of Agnes was soon arranged; and having left every thing in perfect order for departure, she uttered a civil but unanswered "Good-by, aunt," and went away.

It so chanced that a little volume of poems, lent to her by Lady Stephenson, had been left in the drawing-room, and Agnes, wishing to return it before leaving Cheltenham, entered the room to look for it. As a good many circulating library volumes were lying about, it was some minutes before she found it; and just as she had succeeded, and was leaving the apartment, Miss Morrison appeared at the door. She had a letter in her hand, and a bustling, busy look and manner,

Is it possible?" exclaimed the old lady, looking at poor Agnes with very genuine compassion. . . . "God knows you will weep, my poor child. . . . I shall begin to think it but sorry advice, Agnes, when I told you to stay with me. It may, after all, be better to run some risk in leaving home; than brave certain disgrace and ridicule by remaining to abide in her family."

"Is she going to take you to town with her, Agnes?" inquired Lady Stephenson with a look of deep concern.

"Yes, Lady Stephenson, I am to go with her."

There was a very painful silence of a minute or two. Both the admiring friends of Agnes would have done much to save her from being a sharer in such an enterprise; but to interfere with the indisputable authority of such a woman as Mrs. Barnaby in her arrangements concerning a niece, who had no dependence but on her, was out of the question, and the conviction that it was so kept them silent.

"How did you hear this strange story, my dear," said Lady Elizabeth. . . . "Did your aunt explain to you her ridiculous purpose herself?"

"No, Lady Elizabeth. . . . she only bade me prepare my trunk for going to London with her. . . . It was Miss Morrison, whom I met by chance as I came out, who told me the object of the journey; . . . and dreadful as this going to law would be, it is not the worst thing I fear."

"What worse can there be, Agnes?" said Lady Stephenson.

"I am almost ashamed to tell you of such fears, . . . but when I uttered something like a reproach to Miss Morrison for having advised this journey, and writing a letter about it to her brother, who is a lawyer in London, she told me that I ought to be grateful to her for preventing my aunt's following Lord Mucklebury all the way to Rome, for that such was her first intention. . . . and" . . . continued Agnes, bursting anew into tears, "I greatly, greatly suspect that she has not given up this intention yet."

The two ladies exchanged glances of pity and dismay, and Lady Elizabeth, making her a sign to come close to her, took her kindly by the hand, saying, in accents much more gentle than she usually bestowed on any one, "My poor, dear girl, what makes you think this? Tell me, Agnes, tell me all they have said to you."

Agnes knelt down on the old lady's footstool, and gently kissing the venerable hand which held hers, said, "It is very, *very* kind of you to let me tell you all, . . . and your judgment will be more to be trusted than mine as to what it may mean; but my reason for thinking that my aunt is going to do more than she confesses to Miss Morrison is, that she has publicly declared her intended absence will be only for two days; and yet, though she told me this too, she ordered me to pack up every thing I had, . . . even the little collection of books I told you of, Lady Stephenson, . . . and, moreover, instead of letting her maid put up her things, I left her doing it herself, and saw her before I came away putting a vast variety of her most valuable things in a great travelling trunk that she could never think of taking, if it were really her intention to stay in London only two days, and then return to Cheltenham."

"Very suspicious . . . very much so indeed," said the old lady; "and all I can say to you in reply, my poor child, is this. *You must not go abroad with her!* I am not rich enough to charge myself with providing for you, nor must your friend Emily here frighten her new husband by talking of taking possession of you, Agnes, . . . but . . . you must not go abroad with that woman. Governess you must be, I suppose, if things go on in this way; and instead of opposing it, I will try if I cannot find a situation in which you may at least be safer than with this aunt Barnaby. Whatever happens, you must let us hear from you; and remember, the moment you discover that she really proposes to take you abroad, you are to put yourself into a Cheltenham coach, and come directly to me."

What words were these for Agnes to listen to! . . . Colonel Hubert was to take up his residence in that house on the morrow; and she was now told in a voice of positive command, that if what she fully expected would happen, did happen, she was at once to seek a shelter there! She dared not trust her voice to say, "I thank you," but she ventured to raise her eyes to the hard-featured but benignant countenance that bent over her, and the kiss she received on her forehead proved that though her silence might not be fully understood, her gratitude was not doubted.

The evening was not, like many others recently passed

there, so happy, that Mrs. Barnaby's footman often came to escort her home before she thought the time for parting could be half arrived. They had no music, no scraps of poetry in Italian or in English, as touchstones of taste and instruction, with which Lady Stephenson loved to test the powers of her young favourite; but the conversation rested almost wholly upon the gloomy and uncertain future. At length the moment came in which she was to bid these valued friends adieu; they embraced and blessed her with tenderness, nay, even with tears; but little did they guess the tumult that swelled the breast of Agnes. It was Hubert's sister to whom she clung . . . it was Hubert's aunt — almost his mother — who hung over her, looking as if she were her mother too! . . . and on the morrow he would be with them, and he would hear her named; for notwithstanding their unmeasured superiority to her in all ways, they could not forget her so soon, . . . he would hear of her sorrows, of the dangers that surrounded her; and he would hear, too, perhaps, of the shelter offered her in the very house he dwelt in.

All these thoughts were busy in her head as she uttered the last farewell, and turned again in passing through the door to look once more on those who would so soon be looked at by him.

There was certainly a strange pleasure mixed with all this sadness, for though she wept through half the night, she would not have exchanged the consciousness of having been brought nearer to him, even by the act of having mingled tears in parting with his nearest relations, for all the enjoyment that a tranquil spirit and a calm night's rest could offer in exchange for it.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. BARNABY EFFECTS HER RETREAT FROM CHELTENHAM. — SHE CARRIES WITH HER A LETTER. — ITS EFFECT. — AN AMIABLE ATTORNEY. — SPECIMENS OF A NOBLE STYLE OF LETTER-WRITING. — CONSOLATION.

THOUGH the baggage of Mrs. Barnaby was strangely disproportionate to the period she had named for her absence, it

seemed not to excite suspicion, which might, perhaps, be owing to the well-known splendour of her elaborate toilet, which she not unfrequently changed four times in a day, requiring — as all who thought on the subject must be aware — an extent of travelling equipment much exceeding the portion assigned to ordinary ladies.

So she passed forth unchallenged, and unchallenged saw her treasures deposited on roof and in rumble-tumble till all were stowed away; and then, having affectionately squeezed the hand of Miss Morrison, who accompanied her to the stage, she climbed into it, followed by the pale and melancholy Agnes.

Our widow was now beginning to be an experienced traveller, and her first care on reaching London was to secure rooms in a private lodging-house. Notwithstanding the noble visions with which she had recreated her fancy during the last month, she now with great good sense sent them all to the moon, knowing she could easily call them back again if all went well with her; but determined that they should in no way interfere with her enjoyment of the more substantial goods that were still within her reach; so she commissioned the maid of the house to procure her three dozen of oysters and a pot of porter, with which, while Agnes wept herself to sleep, she repaid herself for her day's fatigue, and wisely laid in a stock of strength for the morrow.

Her first object, of course, was to hold communication with the brother of her friend, "Magnus Morrison, Esq., attorney-at-law, Red Lion Square." Such was the address the letter intrusted to her bore; and at breakfast the following morning she sat gazing at it for some minutes before she could decide whether it would be better to convey it herself, or prepare the lawyer to receive her, by letting it precede her for a few hours. She finally decided to send it before her; — the wisdom of which determination will be evident upon the perusal of the letter, such an introduction being well calculated to insure all the zealous attention she desired.

Miss Morrison's letter ran thus: —

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

I never fail, as you well know, to catch all the fish for your net that comes in my way *crowjee eelam too jara*

... and I now send you a client whom I have little doubt you will find answer in every way. She is a most charming woman, and my most particular friend. . . . I don't know a more charming person any where, not even in my dear Paris, so rich, so free in all her expenses, so remarkably obliging, and so very handsome for all those who admire tall, large beauties. But you are too good a lawyer to listen to all this when business is in hand, and so I must come *o fay*. And now, Magnus, be sure to attend to every word. Mrs. Barnaby — this charming friend of mine — has for the last month been receiving the most marked and the most tender attentions from Lord Mucklebury. He is a viscount, my dear Magnus, and — observe — as rich as a Jew. This nobleman has given her, poor dear lady! every reason in the world to believe that his dearest wish, hope, and intention was to marry her; and she, good, tender-hearted creature! perfectly adored him, devoting every hour of the day to the finding out where he was to be seen, and the going there to see him. She had no secrets whatever from me the whole time, and I knew every thing that was going on from the first moment he ever kissed her hand to the most tender interviews that ever passed between them. And how do you think it has all ended? Oh! Magnus, it is impossible to deny that the male sex — lords and all.— are most dreadfully deceitful and false-hearted. All this devoted love, going on, as I tell you, for a whole month, has just ended in nothing. My lord set off in his travelling carriage, with four horses and an out-rider, as we subsequently ascertained, without even taking any leave of the lady at all, or explaining himself the least bit either one way or the other. You may easily guess her feelings. . . . Her first idea, poor thing, was to follow him to the world's end — for there is no doubt in the world that her attachment was of the most sincere kind; but luckily she confided this romantic thought to me, and it struck me directly, Magnus, that the best thing in the world for her to do would be to put the whole affair into your hands. She has got quantities of his letters they are very little letters, to be sure, folded up sometimes not much bigger than a shilling; but still letters are letters, you know; and I can't but think that, with your cleverness, something might be made of an action for damages. Of course, it is natural to suppose that I am a little partial to this sort of men

sure, because I can't well have forgotten yet that the best part of my snug little fortune came to me in the same way, thanks to the good management of our dear good father, Magnus. . . The dear lady listened to reason in a minute, and consented to put herself in your hands, for which reason she is going to set off for London to-morrow morning. She will bring all Lord Mucklebury's letters with her, and it will be for you to judge what use can be made of them ; — only it is but right to mention, that there is no doubt in the world but that Mrs. Barnaby is quite rich enough to pay handsomely, whether she gains the cause or loses it.

“ I am, my dear Magnus,
Your affectionate sister,
“ SARAH MORRISON ”

Mrs. Barnaby enclosed this letter in an envelope, in which she wrote, —

“ MRS. BARNABY presents her compliments to Mr. Magnus Morrison, and will be happy to see him on the business to which the enclosed letter refers, at any hour he will name.

“ No. 5. Half-Moon Street, Piccadilly.”

Having consigned her packet to the post, the widow declared to her anxious companion that she did not mean to waste her time as long as she remained in London ; but should walk to every part of the town, and should expect her to do the same.

“ Will there not be danger of losing ourselves, aunt ? ” said Agnes. “ London, you know, is so much bigger than any place you ever saw.”

“ And what's the good of that piece of wisdom, Miss Solomon ? Perhaps you don't know that I have a tongue in my head, and that the Londoners speak English ? . . . Come and put on your bonnet, if you please, and I'll promise not to leave you in any of the gutters, but bring you safe home again to *No. 5. Half-Moon Street, Piccadilly*. There, you see, I shall know what place to ask for. Wo'n't that do for you ? ”

Agnes felt that all remonstrance would be in vain, and submitted ; though the idea of being dragged through the streets of London by her aunt Barnaby, dressed in the identical green satin gown and pink feathers which had first at-

tracted Lord Mucklebury's attention, was by no means an agreeable prospect.

The expedition, nowever, fatiguing and disagreeable as it proved, was achieved without any very disastrous result. Mrs. Barnaby, indeed, was twice very nearly knocked down by a cab, while staring too eagerly about her when crossing the streets; and friendly as was the old black crape veil of poor Agnes, it could not wholly save her from some tolerably obvious efforts to find out whether the face it sheltered was worthy the graceful symmetry of the person who wore it; . . . but they nevertheless reached their Half-Moon Street without any positive injury to life or limb.

At eight o'clock in the evening, while Mrs. Barnaby and her weary companion were taking tea, the drawing-room door opened, and Mr. Magnus Morrison was announced, and most cordially welcomed by the widow, who not only saw in him the lawyer from whom she hoped to learn how to replenish her waning finances, but also the brother of her dear Miss Morrison, and the only acquaintance she could hope at this trying moment to find or make in London.

But now, as heretofore, the presence of Agnes was inconvenient, which she took care to signify by saying to the lawyer, "I am greatly indebted to you, Mr. Morrison, for your early attention to my note; and I shall be very glad to talk with you on the business that brings me to London . . . but not quite yet . . . we really must be quite by ourselves, for it will be necessary that I should have your whole attention. Will you, in the mean time, permit me to offer you tea?"

Before Mr. Morrison could reply Agnes was on her feet, and asking her aunt in a whisper if she would give her leave to go to bed. "Yes, if you like it, my darling!" . . . replied Mrs. Barnaby, whose tenderness for her niece was always awakened by the presence of strangers. "I am sure you look tired to death. . . . But bring down first, my dear, my writing desk; and remember, my love, to take care that I have warm water when I come up; . . . and don't forget, Agnes, to put my bonnet and shawl, and all that, nicely away . . . and see that I have paper for curling my hair ready on the dressing-table; . . . and don't go to bed till you have put out my flax silk for to-morrow; and just put a stitch in the blonde of my *bonnet-cap*, for I pulled it almost off."

All this was said by the widow in a coaxing sort of half whisper, with an arm round her victim's waist, and a smile of the most fascinating kindness on her own lips.

The desk was brought, and the consulting parties left alone ; while Agnes, as she performed the different tasks imposed on her, and which her great fatigue rendered heavy, could not for an instant banish from her mind the question that had incessantly haunted her from the hour she left the drawing-room of Lady Elizabeth " Will she go abroad ? Shall I be obliged to return to Cheltenham without her ? Shall I be obliged to go to the house where he is living ? "

* * * * *

Mr. Magnus Morrison was by no means an ill-looking man, and though a bachelor of thirty-five, had as little of quizzical peculiarity about him as a careful attorney of that age, unpolished by a wife, can be expected to have. Mrs. Barnaby, though a little his senior, was still, as we know, a lady à prétention, and never permitted any gentleman to approach her without making an experiment upon him with her fine eyes. Their success in the present instance was neither so violent as in the case of Major Allen, nor so instantaneous as in that of the false-hearted peer ; nevertheless enough was achieved to throw an agreeable sort of extraneous interest into the business before them, and the widow disdained not as it proceeded to decorate her narrative and herself with such graces as none but a Mrs. Barnaby can display.

Having given her own version, and with such flourishes as her nature loved, of Lord Mucklebury's violent passion for her, she asked her attentive and somewhat captivated auditor what species of testimony was required to prove a promise of marriage in such a manner as to secure large damages ; " for without being quite certain of obtaining such, you must be aware, my dear sir, that a woman of my station, connections, and fortune, could not think of appearing in court."

" Assuredly not," replied Mr. Magnus Morrison fervently. " Such a measure is never to be resorted to unless the evidence is of a nature that no cross-examination can set aside. My sister tells me, madam, that you have letters. . . . "

" Yes, Mr. Morrison, I have many though I am sorry to say that many more have been destroyed." (This was a

figure of poetry, and of a kind that the widow often adopted to give strength to the narrative portion of her conversation.)

"That is greatly to be regretted, Mrs. Barnaby . . . though we must hope that among those which remain sufficient proof of this very atrocious case will be found to answer the purpose of justice. Was there any principle of selection in the manner in which some were preserved and others destroyed?"

"I can hardly say," replied the lady, "that it was done on any principle, unless the feeling can be so called which leads a woman of delicacy to blush and shrink from preserving the effusions of a passion so vehement as that expressed in some of the letters of Lord Mucklebury."

"They were, then, the most ardent declarations of his attachment that you destroyed, Mrs. Barnaby?"

"Most certainly," said the widow throwing her eyes upon the carpet.

"It is unfortunate, very unfortunate," observed the lawyer, "though it shows a delicacy of mind that it is impossible not to admire. Will you give me leave, madam, to peruse such of the letters as you have preserved?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Mrs. Barnaby, unlocking her writing-desk; "and though I know not how to regret the existence of such feelings, Mr. Morrison, I will not deny that, for the sake of honour and justice, I am sorry now that what I have to show you is so much the least explicit part of the correspondence."

She then drew forth the packet which contained (be it spoken in confidence) every syllable ever addressed to her by the laughter-loving viscount; and greatly as Mr. Magnus Morrison began to feel interested in the case, and much as he would have liked to bring so charming a client into court, he very soon perceived that there was nothing in these highly-scented, but diminutive *feuilles volantes*, at all likely to produce any effect on a jury approaching to that elicited by the evidence of the learned and celebrated Sergeant Buzfuz on an occasion somewhat similar. He continued to read them all, however, and they were numerous, with the most earnest attention and unwearied industry, permitting little or no emotion of any kind to appear on his countenance as he proceeded, and determined to utter no word approaching to an opinion till he had carefully perused them all. Important as Mrs. Barnaby flat-

tered herself these little letters might eventually prove, and interesting as her lawyer found every word of them, the whole collection might perhaps be considered as somewhat wearisome, full of repetition, and even trifling, by the general reader, for which reason a few only shall be selected as specimens, taken at hazard, and without any attention either to their dates or the particular events which led to them.

No. 1.

“PRIMA DONNA DEL MONDO !* ”

“Walk you to-day ? At three be it at which hour my station will be the library. “ M.”

No. 2.

“BELLISSIMA ! ”

“Should I appear to-day (you may guess where) with a friend on my arm, let it not change the sweet demeanour of my charming widow. He is an excellent fellow, but one whom I always treat as if he were not in existence ; — for in truth, being almost as dreadfully in love as myself, he neither sees nor hears. “ M.”

No. 3.

“BELLA DONNA ! ”

“It is three days since I have received a line from the fairest lady in Cheltenham ! Write me a whole page, I beseech you, and let it be such a one as shall console me under the necessity of dining and passing the whole evening with half-a-dozen he-fellows, when the champagne will but ill atone for the sparkling eyes whose light I shall lose by being among them. But if I have one of your exquisite billets in my waistcoat-pocket, I shall bear the loss better. “ M.”

No. 4.

“VEDOVA MARAVIGLIOSA ! ”

“Should I find the Barnaby disengaged in her saloon, were my audacious feet to bear me across its threshold this evening ? “ M.”

* Lord Mucklebury had been assured, on the authority of Mrs Barnaby herself, that her favourite language was the Italian.

lastly, the project of a journey to Rome was beginning to take a very decided shape in her fancy; but amidst all this there remained not the smallest wish or intention of trying to revenge her wrongs by the assistance of the law . . . She was beginning to be too well aware of the melting nature of money in the funds, to wish that the villanous viscount should lead her to expend another shilling upon him.

After the silence of a few minutes, Mrs. Barnaby raised her eyes from the ground, and fixing them with a soft, gentle, resigned smile upon Mr. Morrison, said, —

“ I thank you gratefully, Mr. Morrison, for your frank opinion, given too in so gentlemanlike a manner as to make me feel that I am indeed rather in the hands of a friend than a lawyer; . . . and in return I will use the same frankness with you. I have loved Lord Mucklebury most sincerely! . . . loved him with all the pure disinterested ardour of my character; but the same warm heart, Mr. Morrison, which thus surrenders itself without suspicion or restraint, is precisely of the nature most prompt to reject and forget a being proved to be unworthy of it. . . . Therefore I may now truly say, that this poor bosom (pressing her two hands upon it) suffers more from the void within it, than from tender regret; and I am greatly inclined, since I cannot benefit by your able services as a lawyer, to urge my friendship with your dear sister as a claim upon your kindness as a gentleman. Will you assist to cure the painful void I speak of by giving me your help in my endeavours to see all that is best worth looking at in London? . . . I am sure it would do me good; not to mention that it might give pleasure to the dear child whom you saw with me when you entered. She is quite my idol, and I should delight in procuring her an amusement which I know she would so particularly enjoy.”

Mr. Morrison, who was a shrewd, quick-sighted man, thought there was considerable food for speculation in this speech, and, had leisure served him, he might have reasoned upon it in a spirit not much unlike that of Benedict . . . “ Will you assist to cure the painful void? . . . which is as much as to say . . . ” and so on. . . . He waited not, however, to give this all the attention it merited, but remembering clearly his sister's statement respecting the widow's fortune, replied with most obliging readiness. —

ing costume she could devise, and with somewhat less elegance than usual, that the traitor might see how sorrowful she was, she set forth on her expedition.

Having reached Piccadilly, she called a coach, and in a few minutes was safely deposited before Mivart's door.

"Is Lord Mucklebury here?" . . . she inquired in a voice of authority of the first official she encountered.

"Yes, ma'am," was the answer. "His lordship is at breakfast."

"I must see him, if you please, directly!"

"Is it by appointment, ma'am?" questioned the discreet waiter, looking at her keenly. . . . "His lordship is just going to set off, and is too busy, I believe, to see anybody."

"He is not too busy to see me — I must see him directly!"

"Is it an appointment?" repeated the man, in an accent not the most respectful.

"Yes, it is," . . . replied the unblushing widow.

"Better call his own man, Joe," said another napkin functionary, attracted by the appearance of the lady.

"You had better take this sovereign," said Mrs. Barnaby in a whisper.

Apparently the man thought this advice the best; for taking the coin with such practised dexterity as hardly to make the action perceptible, he gave the lady a look with his knowing eye that said, "Follow me," . . . and slid away among passages and stairs till he had marshalled her to the door of Lord Mucklebury's apartments. Being probably somewhat doubtful whether the office he had performed would be gratefully requited by the gentleman as by the lady, he waited not to open the door, but saying, "There's his room," disappeared, leaving Mrs. Barnaby to announce her ill-used self.

She was a little frightened, but still resolute; and, after pausing for one moment to recover breath, threw open the door and entered.

The waiter's account was strictly true, for his lordship was at breakfast, and his lordship was packing. *En robe de chambre*, with a cup of coffee in one hand, and a bunch of keys in the other, he was standing beside his valet, who knelt before a carriage-seat he was endeavouring to close. Lord Mucklebury was facing the door, and raised his eyes as

leisure to express my gratitude. . . . My dear lady, I am instant starting for the Continent."

"I know it, sir . . . I know it but too well!" replied the widow, considerably embarrassed by his easy tone. . . . "Permit me, however, to speak to you for one moment before I set out."

"Assuredly! . . . Place yourself on this sofa, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . How deeply I regret that moments so delightful . . . Confound you, Rawlins, you'll break those hinges and pieces if you force them so. . . . My dear lady! . . . shocked to death; . . . but, upon my soul, I have not a moment to spare!"

"I wish to speak to you, my lord, without the presence of your servant."

"My dearest Mrs. Barnaby, you need not mind Rawlins any more than the coffee-pot! . . . You have no idea what a capital fellow he is! . . . true as steel . . . silent as the grave . . . That's it, Rawlins! . . . I'll set my foot upon it if you turn the key . . . here! it is this crooked one."

"Lord Mucklebury! . . . you must be aware," . . . said the widow.

"Aware! . . . Good Heaven, yes! . . . To be sure I am! But what can I do, my dearest Mrs. Barnaby? . . ."

terrupted his lordship, handing her a plate of buttered toast, . . . that I am the greatest bear in existence ! . . . No ! you will not eat with me ? . . . But you must excuse me, dear friend, for I have a long drive before me." And, so saying, Lord Mucklebury seated himself at the table, replenished his coffee-cup, broke the shell of an egg, and seriously set about eating an excellent breakfast.

The widow was at a loss what to do or say next. Had he been rude or angry, or even silent and sullen, or in any other mood in the world but one of such very easy good humour, she could have managed better. But a painful sort of conviction began to creep over her that Lord Mucklebury's present conduct, as well as all that had passed before, was merely the result of high breeding and fashionable manners, and that lords and ladies always did so to one another. If this were so, rather than betray such rustic ignorance as to appear surprised at it, she would have consented to live without a lover for weeks and weeks to come ; . . . and the terrible idea followed, that by having ignorantly hoped for too much she might have lost a most delightful opportunity of forming an intimate friendship with a peer of the realm, that might have been creditable and useful to her, either abroad or at home.

Fortunately Lord Mucklebury was really hungry, and he ate so heartily for a minute or two, that the puzzled lady had time to settle her purpose, and take the new tone that her ambition suggested to her, which she did with a readiness that his lordship really admired.

" Well ! . . . I see how it is, my lord," said she ; " I come here to ask you to do a commission for me at Rome, where the papers told me you were going ; but you are too busy and too hungry to spare a moment to an old acquaintance."

" No ! upon my soul !" . . . said Lord Mucklebury, throwing some of his former homage into his eyes as he bowed to her. " There is no commission in the world you could give me, from New York to Jerusalem, that I would not execute with the fidelity of a western or an eastern slave. What are your commands, bewitching Mrs. Barnaby ?"

" Merely, my lord, that you would buy a set of shells for me — as nearly like lady Stephenson's as possible ; and I dare say," she added, very cleverly drawing out her purse, to avoid

any misconception respecting the object, — “ I dare say your lordship, who has travelled so much, may be able to tell me pretty nearly what the price will be. . . . About ten pounds, I think.”

And ten golden sovereigns were immediately thrown from the purse upon the table.

Lord Mucklebury, perfectly delighted by this brilliant proof of the versatility of her powers, gaily took her purse from her hand, and replacing the money in it, said, —

“ It is not so that I execute the commissions of my fair friends, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . I will note your orders in my pocket-book, thus ‘ A set of the handsomest shells in Rome for the charming Mrs. Barnaby.’ See ! I can hardly overlook it ; and when I have the pleasure of presenting them, we will settle about the price.”

He replaced her purse in her hand, which he kissed with his best air of Cheltenham gallantry ; upon which she wisely rose, and saying, with every appearance of being perfectly satisfied with her reception, “ Adieu, my lord ! forgive my intrusion, and let me hope to have the pleasure of seeing you when you return,” she took her departure, perfectly convinced that her new-born conjecture was right, and that lords had privileges not accorded to other men.

This persuasion, however, as well as the interview which gave rise to it, she determined to keep to her own breast ; not sorry, perhaps, that some of her friends might go to their graves with the persuasion that, though deserted by him, she once had a nobleman for her lover, and vastly well satisfied with herself for having found out her plebeian blunder in time to prevent the loss of so very valuable a friend as she still thought Lord Mucklebury might be.

She returned in good time to rest and refresh herself with a draught of her favourite beverage (porter) before Mr. Morrison arrived.

If she had thought this gentleman worthy of some little *agaceries* before her definitive interview with her noble friend, she certainly did not think him less so afterwards, and the morning and the evening passed away with great appearance of enjoyment to both the gentleman and lady. Mrs. Barnaby began to think, as upon former occasions of the same kind, that it would be vastly more agreeable if Agnes were not of the party.

The same idea had occurred to the suffering girl herself more than once in the course of the day. Whether her own wish was father to the thought, or that her aunt had purposely permitted her feelings to be seen, it matters not to inquire; but when, on the following morning, Agnes complained of headache, and expressed a timid wish to be left at home, Mrs. Barnaby, without hesitation, replied, —

“ I think you are right, Agnes. . . . You have no strength for that sort of thing so it is very lucky you brought your books, and you may unpack them if you will, and set to work.”

This release was hailed with thankfulness. . . . Lady Stephenson and Miss Peters were both written to during the leisure it afforded, and though she could give no very satisfactory intelligence to either, there was a pleasure in writing to them that no other occupation could give her.

After this time several days elapsed, during which Mrs. Barnaby was scarcely at home at all, except for the purpose of eating her dinner, which meal Mr. Morrison regularly partook with them.

More than a week passed in this manner; Mrs. Barnaby becoming every day more convinced that, although every sensible woman ought to marry a lord, if she can get one, yet, nevertheless, that an active, intelligent, obliging friend, full of admiration, and obedient to command, was an excellent substitute for every thing else during an interregnum between the more violent attachments by which the career of all distinguished women must necessarily be marked. And Mr. Morrison, as he on his side remarked how freely the lady hired her flies and her hackney chariots, — how little she thought of the price of tickets for plays, operas, and that realisation of all her dreams of elegant festivity, Vauxhall, — how liberally wine and even brandy flowed at the savoury little dinners in her drawing-room, — as he remarked on all this, he could not but reason with himself on the greatly superior felicity of being the husband of such a lady, and living without any trouble at all upon her fortune, to the remaining a bachelor in Red Lion Square, under the necessity of working whenever work could be had in order to pay his rent, settle his tailor's bill, and find wherewithal to furnish commons for himself and his one domestic.

It is certain, however, that up to this time no serious idea of marrying Mr. Magnus Morrison had entered the widow's head; on the contrary, she was fully determined that, as soon as she had seen London "well," she would see Paris too, and was not without a vague notion that there might be something very elegant and desirable in becoming the wife of a French grandee. But these ruminations interfered not at all with the amiable amenity of her demeanour to her assiduous attendant Agnes was as little in their way as it was possible she could be the weather was remarkably fine and, on the whole, it may be doubted if any lady of thirty-seven ever made her first *début* in the metropolis of the united kingdoms with more perfect satisfaction to herself.

Mrs. Barnaby reached London on a Thursday evening; the first Sunday showed her the Foundling, all the little children, and a popular preacher, which together constituted one of Mr. Morrison's favourite lions. The Sunday following, being the last, according to her own secret determination, that she would pass in England, she was left during the early part of the day to her own devices, Mr. Morrison having a deed to draw, which could no longer be safely postponed; and she therefore obligingly asked Agnes if she should not like to go to church with her. Agnes willingly assented, and they went to the morning service at St. James's. In returning thence our gaily-dressed widow, full of animation, and the hope of finding Mr. Morrison ready to take luncheon with her previous to their projected walk in Kensington Gardens, remarked, as she gracefully paced along the crowded pavement, that one individual among the many who eyed her appeared to follow her movements with particular attention. Mrs. Barnaby was never stared at without feeling delighted by the compliment she thought it implied, and simpered and frolicked with her parasol in her best manner, till at length, having no one else to whom she could point out the flattering circumstance, she said to Agnes, as they turned down Half-moon Street into which the admiring individual turned too "Do look at that man, Agnes He has never ceased to follow and stare at me since we left the church. There, now, he is going to pass us again. . . . Is he not an impudent fellow?"

"Perhaps he knows you, aunt," said Agnes, raising her

eyes as the man passed them. . . . " I think I have seen him at Cheltenham."

This suggestion heightened Mrs. Barnaby's colour so considerably that it was perceptible through all her rouge.

" You have seen him at Cheltenham ? . . . Where, pray ? "

" I do not well remember ; in a shop, I think."

Mrs. Barnaby asked no more questions, but knocked rather hastily at the door of her lodgings ; but though the person had crossed the street, and in doing so passed close to her, he made no attempt to speak to her, but passed on his way, not, however, before he had so refreshed her memory respecting her Cheltenham debts as to make her suddenly decide upon leaving London on the morrow.

She found Mr. Magnus Morrison waiting for her, as well-looking and as devoted as ever ; she did all but quite forget her recent alarm, its only effect being, when Agnes, as usual, declined her invitation to go out with them, to say in a whisper to her in the window recess farthest removed from her waiting gentleman, " I think I shall leave London to-morrow night, so you may employ yourself in getting every thing ready for packing, Agnes. . . ." She then turned gaily to her escort, and they set off together.

During the whole of this tedious week Agnes had used every means within her very limited power to ascertain what her aunt's plans were for the future ; and this not only to satisfy her own natural curiosity on the subject, but also that she might have sufficient information to justify her writing another letter to Lady Stephenson. But all her inquiries had been so vaguely answered, that she was quite as ignorant of what her next movement might be as when she arrived, and was living in a very torturing sort of suspense, between hope that fate by some means or other would oblige her to return to Cheltenham, and fear lest the mystery that veiled the future might only be elucidated when too late for her to obey the command which, *in case of the worst*, was to send her there.

So weary was she both of her present position and of the doubt which concealed the termination of it, that she joyfully set herself to obey the parting injunction of her aunt ; and having rapidly gone through this task, began her second letter to her Cheltenham friends, stating exactly all she knew, and all she did not know, and at length leaving her letter unfinished.

that her postscript, as she said, might contain, according to the imputed custom of all ladies, the essential part of her letter.

The fine bonnets and smart waistcoats of Kennington Gardens, together with a bagful of queen-cakes, with which she had provided herself for her own refreshment and that of her companion during a promised hour of repose in one of the alcoves, so pleasantly beguiled the hours, that it was near seven before they returned to dinner; when the widow confessed herself too tired for any thing more that day; and at an hour much earlier than usual Mr. Morrison took his departure, well informed, as it seemed, of the lady's intentions for the morrow, for Agnes heard him say, —

“ Well, then, Mrs. Barnaby . . . one more delightful excursion to-morrow — the Surrey Gardens will delight you! . . . and at two o'clock I will be here. . . . Sorry am I to think for the last time . . . at least for the present.” A cordial hand-shaking followed, and the door closed after him.

“ I have done what you bid me, aunt,” said Agnes; “ all your things are got ready for you to place them as you like, and one of the boxes half filled, just as you did before. . . . Shall I write the directions, aunt?”

“ We can do that to-morrow . . . I am tired to death. Ring the bell. . . . No — run down yourself, for the girl looks as cross as two sticks . . . run down, Agnes, and tell her to get my porter directly; and I think you must bring it to me in bed, for I can't keep my eyes open.”

“ Will you tell me, aunt, where we are going?” said Agnes timidly, as she took up one of the candles to light her steps down two flights of stairs.

“ Don't plague me now, Agnes,” was the reply; “ I have told you that I am tired to death, and nobody but you would think of teasing one with such a question now. You know well enough, though you have not had the grace to thank me for it, that I never take you any where that it is not most delightful to go to. . . . What other country-girl in the world is there at your age that has had the advantages you have Exeter Clifton Cheltenham London; and if you don't provoke me too much, and make me turn you out of house and home, I'll take you now but it's no matter where — you'll know soon enough to be grateful, if *there's* such a thing as gratitude in your heart. . . . but I am

a fool to expect it, and see you standing there when I've begged, as if my life depended upon it, that you would *please* to order me a little beer."

Agnes said no more; but went to bed that night with her fears most reasonably strengthened that she should not learn Mrs. Barnaby's destination till it was too late to avoid sharing it, let it be in what direction it might.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE. — ANOTHER LETTER FROM MISS MORRISON PRODUCTIVE OF A POWERFUL EFFECT UPON HER BROTHER. — HE FORSAKES HIS CLIENT AND HIS FRIEND. — AGNES IS LEFT ALONE, AND EMPLOYS SOME OF HER LEISURE IN WRITING A LETTER TO MISS COPTON.

THE following day was an eventful one. For the first time since they had been in London, Agnes, on seeing her aunt preparing to go out, asked permission to go with her, and "You may go if you will," was the answer; but before her bonnet was tied on, Mrs. Barnaby changed her mind, saying, "Put down your bonnet, Agnes . . . upon second thoughts I don't choose to take you. . . . Look at all these things of mine lying about here! . . . I have told you that it is likely enough we may set off by a night coach, and I have got, as you know, to go out with Mr. Morrison; so I should be much obliged if you would please to tell me how all my packing is to get done?"

"If you would let me go with you now, aunt, I shall have plenty of time to do all that remains while you are out with Mr. Morrison," replied Agnes.

"Agnes, you are, without exception, the most impertinent and the most plaguing girl that ever a widowed aunt half ruined herself to provide for But I wo'n't be bullied in this way, either. . . . Stay at home, if you please, and do what I bid you, or before this time to-morrow you may be crying in the streets of London for a breakfast. . . . I should like to know who there is besides me in the wide world who would undertake the charge of you? Do you happen to know any such people, miss? If you do, be off to them if you

please — the sooner the better ; . . . but if not, stay at home for once without grumbling, and do what you're bid."

There was just sufficient truth mixed with the injustice of these harsh words to go to the heart of poor Agnes. Her aunt Compton, in reply to a letter of Mrs. Barnaby, written in a spirit of wanton impertinence, and in which she made a formal demand of one hundred pounds a year for the expenses of Agnes, answered in great wrath, that she and Agnes both had better take care not to change their residence so often as to lose a parish settlement, for they might live to find that a much better dependence than any thing they would obtain from her. This pettish epistle, received the day before they left Silverton, was carefully treasured by Mrs. Barnaby, and often referred to when she was anxious to impress on her niece a sense of her forlorn condition and helpless dependence. So all hope from that quarter seemed to be for ever shut out . . . And could she forget that even at the moment when the dangers of her situation had so forcibly struck Lady Elizabeth Norris, as to make her approve what she had before declared to be worse than *any home*, — that even at that moment she had explicitly declared that neither herself nor her niece could take charge of her ?

These were mournful thoughts ; and it was no great proof of Agnes's wisdom, perhaps, that, instead of immediately proceeding to the performance of her prescribed task, she sat down expressly to ruminate upon them. But the meditation was not permitted to be long ; for hardly had she rested her elbow upon the table, and her cheek upon her hand, in the manner which ladies under such circumstances always do, than she was startled by a violent knocking and simultaneous ringing at the street-door, followed, as soon as it was opened, by a mixture of two or three loud and angry voices, amidst which she clearly distinguished that of her aunt ; and the moment after she burst into the room, accompanied by the gentleman who had appeared to admire her so greatly in the street the day before, together with two other much less well-looking personages, who stuck close upon the heels of Mrs. Barnaby, with more appearance of authority than respect.

" You shall live to repent this treatment of a lady," cried Mrs. Barnaby, addressing the hero of her yesterday's adventure, who was no other than the keeper of the livery-stable

from whom she had hired the carriage and horses which had dignified her existence for the last month. "You shall be taught to know what is due from a trumpery country tradesman like you, to a person of my fortune and station. What put it into your head, you vile fellow, instead of waiting my return to Cheltenham, to follow me to London in this abominable manner, and to arrest me in the public streets?"

"It is no difficult matter to tell you that, Mrs. Barnaby, if that's your name," replied the man; "and you'll find that I am not the only vile fellow holding himself ready to pay you the same compliment; though I, knowing the old saying 'First come, first served,' took some trouble to be the first."

"And do you really pretend to fancy, you pitiful creature," cried Mrs. Barnaby, in a voice in which terror and rage were struggling, — "do you really pretend to believe that I am not able to pay your twopenny-halfpenny bill a thousand times over?"

"Can't say, indeed, ma'am," replied the man; "I shall not stand upon sending you to prison if you will discharge the account as here we stand, paying fees and expenses of course, as is fitting. . . . Here are the items, neither many nor high:—

	£	s.	d.
Carriage and horses one month, twenty-five shillings			
per diem	-	-	-
Coachman's livery, board, and wages	-	37	0
Footman's ditto, hired to order	-	20	0
	-	25	0
	£82	0	0
Deduct liveries, if returned	-	12	0
Remains	£70	0	0

And all our expenses and fees added wo'n't make it above 77*l.* or 78*l.* altogether; so, ma'am, if you are the great lady you say, you wo'n't find no great difficulty in giving me a write-off for the sum, and my good friends here shall stay while I run and get it cashed, after which I will be ready to make you my bow, and say good morning."

The anger of Mrs. Barnaby was not the less excited because what Mr. Simmons, the livery-stable keeper, said was true;

and she seized with considerable quickness the feature of the case which appeared the most against him.

"Your vulgar mode of proceeding at Cheltenham, Mr. Simmons, is, I am happy to say, quite peculiar to yourself; or though, for my age, I have lived a good deal in the world, I certainly never saw any thing like it. Here have I, like a woman of fortune as I am, paid nobly, since I have been in your trumpery town, for every single thing for which it is customary to pay ready money; and when a job like yours, which never since the creation of the world was paid except from quarter to quarter, has run up for one month, down comes the stable-man post haste after me with a writ and arrest. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself."

"I dare say I should, ma'am, you talking so fine as you do, if I hadn't nothing to put forward in return. I don't believe, Mrs. Barnaby, but what you, or any other rich-seeming lady like you, . . . I don't believe but what any such might have come to Cheltenham, and have run up debts to the tune of a thousand pounds, and not one of us taken fright at it, provided the lady had stayed quiet and steady in the town, where one had one's eyes upon her, and was able to see what she was about. But just do now look at the difference. 'The season's pretty fullish,' says one, 'and trade's brisk!' . . . 'That's true,' says another, 'only some's going off, and that's never a good sign, specially if they go without paying . . . ' 'And who's after that shabby trick?' says another: . . . 'Neither more nor less than the gay widow Barnaby!' is the answer. . . . 'The devil she is!' says one; 'she owes me twenty pounds . . . '—'I hope you are out there, neighbour,' says another, 'for she owes me thirty . . . ' 'And me ten'—'and me fifty'—'and me nineteen'—'and me forty,' and so on for more than I'll number. And what, pray, is the wisest among them likely to do in such a case? Why, just what your humble servant has done, neither more nor less."

"And what right have you, audacious man! to suppose that I have any intention of not returning, and paying all I owe, as I have ever and always done before?"

"Nothing particular, except your just saying, ma'am, that you should be back in two days, and nevertheless not making yourself be heard of in ten, and your rooms kept, and your poor maid kept in 'em all the time too."

"This man talks like one who knows not what a lady is," said Mrs. Barnaby, her eyes flashing, and her face crimson; "but I must beg to ask of you, sir," turning to one of the Bow-street officials, "whether I am not to have time allowed for sending to my lawyer, and giving him instructions to settle with this fellow here?"

"Why, by rights, ma'am, you should go to a sponging-house without loss of time, that we might get the committal made out, and all regular; but if you be so inclined as to make it worth while to my companion and me, I don't think we shall object to keeping guard over you here instead, while you send off for any friends you chose to let into the secret."

"The friends I shall send to are my men of business, fellow!" replied Mrs. Barnaby, with the strongest expression of disdain that she could throw into her countenance. "You don't, I hope, presume to imagine that I would send for any one of rank to affront them with the presence of such as you?"

"Fair words butter no parsnips, is a good saying and a true one; . . . but I'll add to it, that saucy ones unlock no bolts; and if you expect to get out of this scrape by talking big, it's likely you my find yourself mistaken."

"A bill must be a good deal longer than this is, man, before the paying it will be much of a scrape to me," said the widow, affecting to laugh. "What a fool you are, Agnes," she continued, turning to the corner of the room into which the terrified girl had crept, "what a prodigious fool, to be sure, you must be, to sit there looking as white as a sheet, because an insolent tradesman chooses to bring in a bill of a month's standing, with a posse of thief-takers to back it. . . . Get up, pray, and bring my desk here. . . . I wish to write to my attorney."

In obedience to this command, Agnes rose from her chair, and attempted to cross the room to fetch the desk, which was at the other extremity of it; but not all her efforts to arouse her strength sufficed to overcome the sick faintness which oppressed her. "Do, for God's sake, move a little faster, child," said Mrs. Barnaby; but Agnes failed in her habitual and meek obedience, not by falling into a chair, but by sitting down in one, conscious that her fainting at such a moment must greatly increase her aunt's embarrassment.

"I'll get the desk, miss," said one of the terrible men, in a voice so nearly expressive of pity, that tears started to her own eyes in pity of herself, as she thought how wretched must be the state of one who could inspire such a feeling in such a being; but she thanked him, and he placed the lady's desk before her — that pretty little rosewood desk that had been and indeed still was the receptacle of my Lord Mucklebury's flattering if not binding effusions; and as the thought crossed the brain of Mrs. Barnaby that she had hoped to make her fortune by these same idle papers, she felt for the very first time in her life, that perhaps, after all, she had not managed her affairs quite so cleverly as she might have done. It was a disagreeable idea; but even as she conceived it her spirit rose to counteract any salutary effect such a notion might produce; and with a toss of the head that indicated defiance to her own common sense, she opened her desk with a jerk, and began enditing an epistle to Mr. Magnus Morrison.

But this epistle, though it reached the lawyer in a reasonably short time after it was written, was not the first he received that day, . . . for the Cheltenham post had brought him the following:—

"DEAR BROTHER,

"Don't blame me if the gay widow I introduced to you the week before last, should prove to be a *flam*, as my dear father used to call it. . . . I am sorry to say there are great suspicions of it going about here. She left us telling every body that she should be back in two days; and it is now more than ten since she started, and no soul has heard a word about her since. This looks odd, and bad enough, you will think; but it is not the worst part of the story, I'm sorry to say, *pas de too*, as you shall hear. When she first came to Cheltenham she took very good rooms . . . a separate drawing-room, which always looks well . . . and dress, and all that, quite corresponding, but no servants nor carriage, nor any thing of the high-flying kind. . . . Now observe, Magnus, what follows, and then I think that you will come to a right notion of what sort of person you have got to deal with. No sooner did Mrs. Barnaby get acquainted with Lord Mucklebury then she set off *living at the rate* of some thousands a year; and the worst is, *as far as I am concerned*, that she coaxed me to go round be-

speaking and ordering every thing for her. I know you will tell me, Magnus, that my father's daughter ought to have known better, and so I ought; but, upon my word, she took me in so completely that I never felt a single moment's doubt about the truth of all she said. . . . And I believe, too, that the superior sort of elegant look of that beautiful Miss Willoughby went for something with me. Having told you all this, it wo'n't be necessary, I fancy, to say much more in respect to putting you on your guard. . . . Of course, you will take care to do nothing in the way of standing bail, or any thing of that sort. . . . *paw see bate*, you will say. All Cheltenham is talking about it; and I was told at breakfast this morning that Simmons, who furnished the carriage, horses, and servants, is gone to London to look after her; and that Wright the mercer, and several others, talk of doing the same. *Too sell aw man we*; but it can't be helped. . . . So many people, too, come to me for information, just as if I knew any more about her than any body else at the boarding table. . . . That queer Lady Elizabeth Norris sent for me yesterday, begging I would call upon her; and when I got there I found it was for nothing in the world but to ask me questions about this Mrs. Barnaby. And there was that noble-looking Colonel Hubert, who sat and listened to every word I uttered just as if he had been as curious an old woman as his aunt: *maize eel foe dear*, Magnus, that men are sometimes quite as curious as women. . . . However, they neither of them got much worth hearing out of me; and yet I almost thought at one time that the high and mighty colonel was writing down what I said, for he had got his gold pencil-case in his hand; and though it was on the page of a book that he seemed to be scribbling, I saw plain enough by his eye that he was listening to me. You know, brother, I am pretty sharp, and I have got a few presents out of this fly-away lady, let what will come of it. But I could not help thinking, Magnus, — and if it was in a printed book it would be called a *fine observation*, — I could not help thinking how such a vulgar feeling as curiosity spoils the elegance of the manners. Lady Elizabeth, who has often told me that I speak the most exquisite French she ever heard, and who always before yesterday seemed delighted to have the opportunity of conversing with me in this very genteel language, never said one word in it all the time I stayed;

and once when, as usual, I spoke a few words, she looked as cross as a bear, and said, 'Be so good as to speak English just now, Miss Morrison.' Very impertinent, I thought, *may set eh gal*. Don't think the worse of me for this unfortunate blunder. . . . Let me hear how you are going on, and believe me

"Your affectionate sister,

"SARAH MORRISON."

Mr. Magnus Morrison had by no means recovered the blow given him by this most displeasing news, when a note from Mrs. Barnaby, to the following effect, was put into his hands:—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"A most ridiculous, but also disagreeable circumstance, has happened to me this morning. A paltry little tradesman of Cheltenham, to whom I owe a few pounds, has taken fright because I did not return to my apartments there at the moment he expected me . . . the cause of which delay you must be aware has been the great pleasure I have received from seeing London so agreeably. . . . However, he has had the incredible insolence to follow me with a writ, and I must beg you to come to me with as little delay as possible, as your bail, I understand, will prevent my submitting to the indignity of being lodged in a prison during the interval necessary for my broker (who acts as my banker) to take the proper measures for supplying me with the trifling sum I want. In the hope of immediately seeing you,

"I remain, dear sir,

"Most truly yours,

"MARTHA BARNABY."

Mr. Magnus Morrison was not "so quick," as it is called, as his sister Sarah, and in the present emergency felt totally unable to fabricate an epistle, or even to invent a plausible excuse for an absence, which he nevertheless finally determined should be eternal. He was ill-inspired when he took this resolution, for had he attended the lady's summons, he *might, with little trouble, have made a more profitable client of her yet than often fell to his lot.* But he was terror-

struck at the word BAIL ; and forgetting all the beef-steaks, cheese-cakes, porter, and black wine that he had swallowed at the widow's cost, he very cavalierly sent word by the sheriff's officer, who had brought her note, that he was very sorry, but that it was totally out of his power to come.

On receiving this message, delivered, too, with the commentary of a broad grin, even Mrs. Barnaby turned a little pale ; but she speedily recovered herself on recollecting how very easy and rapid an operation the selling out stock was ; so, once more raising her dauntless eye, she said, with an assumption of dignity but little mitigated by this rebuff, . . . " I presume you will let me wait in my own apartments till I can send to my broker ? "

" Why, 'tis possible, ma'am, you see, that it may be totally out of his power too, like this t'other gentleman . . . and we can't be kept waiting all day . . . You'll have a trifle to pay already for the obligingness we have shown, and so you must be pleased to get ready without more ado."

" You don't mean to take me to prison, fellow, for this trumpery debt ? "

" 'Tis where ladies always do go when they keep carriages without paying for them, unless, indeed, they have got husbands as can go for them ; and as that don't seem to be your case, ma'am, we must really trouble you to make haste."

" Gracious Heaven ! . . . It is incredible ! " . . . cried the widow, now really in an agony. " Why, fellow, I tell you I have thousands in the funds that I can sell out at an hour's warning ! "

" So much the better, ma'am — so much the better for us all, as, in that case, we shall be sure to get our own at last ; and if the thing can be settled so easily, it is quite beneath such a clever lady as you to make a fuss about lodging at the king's charge for a night or so. . . . Pray, miss, can you help the gentlewoman to put up a night-cap, and such like little comforts, . . . not forgetting a small provision of ready money, if I might advise, for that's what makes the difference between a bad lodging and a good one where we are going. . . . Dick . . . run out and call a coach, will you ? "

All further remonstrance proved useless ; and Mrs. Barnaby, alternately scolding and entreating, was forced at last to submit

to the degradation of being watched by a bailiff's officer as she went to her chamber to prepare herself for this terrible change of residence. The most bitter moment of all, perhaps, was that in which she was told that she must go alone, for that they had no orders to permit the attendance of any one. It was only then that she felt, in some degree, the value of the gentle observant kindness which had marked every word and look of Agnes from the moment when — her first feeling of faintness over — she assiduously drew near her, put needle-work into her hands, set herself to the same employment, and, with equal ingenuity and sweet temper, contrived to make the long interval during which they had to endure the presence of two of the men, while the third was despatched to Mr. Morrison, infinitely more tolerable than could have been hoped for. But on this point the officials were as peremptory as in the commands they reiterated that she should get ready, promising, however, that application should be made for leave to let the young lady be with her, if she liked it.

"You may save yourselves the trouble, brutes as you are," cried Mrs. Barnaby, as, with something very like a sob, she returned the kiss of Agnes. "I'll defy you to keep me in your vile clutches beyond this time to-morrow. . . . Take care that this letter is put into the post directly, Agnes; but I will give it to the maid myself. . . . It will reach my broker by four or five o'clock, I should think; and I'll answer for his not neglecting the business; but it may, however, be near dinner-time before I get back — so don't be frightened, my dear, if it is; and here is the key of the money-drawer, you know, if you want to pay any thing."

"Better divide the money-drawer with the young lady, at any rate," said one of the men, laughing.

"That you may pick my pockets, perhaps?" replied the vexed prisoner.

"Have you enough money with you, aunt?" whispered Agnes in her ear.

"Plenty, my dear; and more than I'll spend upon them, depend upon it," she replied aloud. . . . This drew on a fresh and not very gentle declaration that they must be gone directly; and the unlucky Mrs. Barnaby, preceded by one and followed by two attendants, descended the stairs, and mounted the hackney-coach.

It was then that Agnes for the first time began to understand and feel the nature of her own situation. Alone, utterly alone in lodgings in the midst of London, totally ignorant of the real state of her aunt's affairs, and, unhappily, so accustomed to hear her utter the most decided falsehoods upon all subjects, that nothing she had said on this gave her any confidence in the certainty either of her speedy return, or of her being immediately able to settle all claims upon her. What, then, was it her duty to do? During the first few moments of meditation on her desolate condition, she thought that the danger of being taken abroad could not have been greater than that which had now fallen upon her, and consequently that Lady Elizabeth would be ready to extend to her the temporary shelter she had told her to claim, in case of what then appeared the worst necessity. But a very little calmer reflection made her shrink from this; and the fact that Colonel Hubert was now with her, which, under other circumstances, would have made such an abode, if enjoyed only for a day or two, the dearest boon that Providence could grant her, now caused her to decide, with a swelling heart, that she would not accept it.

The nature and degree of the disgrace which her aunt had now brought upon her was so much worse than all that either her vanity or her coquetry had hitherto achieved, that she felt herself incalculably more beneath him than ever, and felt during these dreadful moments that she would rather have begged her bread back to Empton, than have met the doubtful welcome of his eye upon seeing her under such circumstances.

This thought of Empton recalled the idea of the person whose liberal kindness had for years bestowed on her this only home that she had ever loved. Was it possible, that if made acquainted with her present deplorable situation, she could refuse to extend some sort of protection to one whose claim upon her she had formerly acknowledged so freely, and who had never forfeited it by any act of her own? . . . "I will write to her!" said Agnes, suddenly rousing herself, as it occurred to her that she was now called upon to act for herself. "God knows," thought she, "what my unfortunate and most unwise aunt Barnaby may have written or said to provoke her; but now, at least, without either rebellion or deceit, I may myself address her."

This idea generated a hope that seemed to give her new life, and with a rapid pen she wrote as follows:—

they had imagined her likely to excite, it was soothing to all her feelings; but, required or accorded as mere ordinary charity, it was intolerable. A melancholy attempt at dining occupied a few minutes, and then hour after hour passed over her, slowly and sadly, till the light faded. But she had not energy for employment; not one of all her best-loved volumes could have fixed her attention for a moment. She called for no candles, but lying on the sofa, her aching head pillowed by her arm, she suffered herself to dwell on all the circumstances of her situation, which weighed most heavily upon her heart; and assuredly the one which brought the greatest pang with it was the recollection of having won the affection of Colonel Hubert's family, just at the moment when disgrace so terrible had fallen on her own, as to make her rather dread than wish to see him again

CHAPTER V.

AGNES RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED VISITER, AND AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION. — SHE ALSO RECEIVES A LETTER FROM CHELTENHAM, AND FROM HER AUNT BARNABY.

AGNES was roused from this state of melancholy musing by a double knock at the door.

"Is it possible," she said, starting up, "that she spoke truly, and that she is already released?"

The street-door was opened, but the voice of Mrs. Barnaby did not make its way up the stairs before her,—a circumstance so inevitable upon her approach,—that, after listening for it in vain for a moment, the desolate girl resumed her attitude, and endeavoured to recover the train of thought that had been broken. But she was not destined to do so, at least for the present, for the maid threw open the drawing-room door, and announced "A gentleman."

Agnes, as we have said, was sitting in darkness, and the girl very judiciously placed her slender tallow-candle in its tin receptacle on the table, saying, as she set a chair for "the gentleman," "I will bring candles in a minute, miss," and then departed.

Agnes raised her eyes as the visiter approached, and had

the light been feebler still she would have found no difficulty in discovering that it was Colonel Hubert who stood before her. He bowed to the angle of the most profound respect, and though he ventured to extend his hand in friendly greeting, he took hers with the air of a courtier permitted to offer homage to a sovereign princess.

Agnes stood up; she received his offered hand, and raised her eyes to his face, but uttered no word either of surprise or joy. Her face was colourless, and traces of very recent tears were plainly visible; she trembled from head to foot, and Colonel Hubert, frightened, as a brave man always is when he sees a woman really sinking under her sex's weakness, replaced her on the sofa almost as incapable of speaking as herself.

"Do not appear distressed at seeing me, dearest Miss Willoughby," said he, "or I shall be obliged to repent having ventured to wait on you. I should not have presumed to do this, had not your friends, your truly attached friends, my aunt and sister, authorised my doing so."

"Oh! what kindness!" exclaimed poor Agnes, bursting into a flood of most salutary tears. "Do not think me ungrateful, Colonel Hubert, if I could not say . . . if I did not speak to you. . . . Do you, indeed, come to me from Lady Elizabeth?"

"Here are my credentials," he replied, smiling, and presenting a letter to her. "We learned that your foolish aunt . . . forgive me, Miss Willoughby; but the step I have taken can only be excused by explaining it with the most frank sincerity . . . we learned that Mrs. Barnaby, having quitted Cheltenham suddenly (the ostensible reason for doing which was bad enough), had left a variety of debts unpaid; and that her creditors, alarmed at her not returning, were taking active measures to secure her person. . . . Is this true? . . . Is your aunt arrested?"

"She is," replied Agnes faintly.

"Good God! . . . You are here, then, entirely alone?"

"I am quite alone," was the answer, though it was almost lost in the sob that accompanied it.

"Oh! dearest Agnes," cried Colonel Hubert, in a burst or uncontrollable emotion, "I cannot see you thus, and longer retain the secret that has been hidden in my heart almost from

the first hour I saw you ! . . . I love you, Agnes, beyond all else on earth ! . . . Consent to be my wife, and danger and desertion shall never come near you more !”

What a moment was this to hear such an avowal ! . . . Human life can scarcely offer extremes more strongly marked of weal and woe than those presented by the actual position of Agnes, and that proposed to her by the man she idolised. But let De la Rochefoucault say what he will; there are natures capable of feeling something nobler than the love of self ; . . . and after one moment of happy triumphant swelling of the heart that left no breath to speak, she heaved a long deep sigh that seemed to bring her back from her momentary glimpse of an earthly paradise to things as they are, and said slowly, but with great distinctness, “ No ! never will I be your wife ! . . . never, by my consent, shall Colonel Hubert ally himself to disgrace !”

Had this been said to a younger man, it is probable that he would not have found in it any thing calculated to give a mortal wound to his hopes and wishes ; but it fell with appalling coldness on the heart of the brave soldier, who had long kept Cupid at defiance by the shield of Mars, and who had just made the first proposal of marriage that had ever passed his lips. It was her age and his own that rose before him as she uttered her melancholy “ No, never !” . . . and Agnes became almost the first object to whom he had ever, even for a moment, been unjust. He gave her no credit . . . no, not the least, for the noble struggle that was breaking her heart, and meant most sincerely what he said, when he replied,—

“ Forgive me, Miss Willoughby. . . Had I been a younger man the offer of my hand, my heart, my life, would not have appeared to you, as it doubtless must do now,—the result of sober, staid benevolence, desirous of preserving youthful innocence from unmerited sorrow. . . Such must my love seem. . . So let it seem ; . . . but it shall never cause one hour’s pain to you.” . . . He was silent for a moment, and had to struggle, brave man as he was, against feelings whose strength, perhaps, only showed his weakness. . . . “ But even so,” he added, making a strong effort to speak steadily, “ even so ; let me not be here in vain ; listen to me as a friend and father.”

Poor Agnes ! This was a hard trial. To save him, worshipped as he was, from a marriage that must be considered

as degrading, she could have sacrificed herself with the triumphant courage of a proud martyr, but to leave him with the idea that she was too young to love him! . . . to let that glowing, generous heart sink back upon itself, because it found no answering warmth in her! . . . in her! who would have died only to purchase the right of owning that she never did, and never could, love any man but him! . . . It was too terrible, and the words, "Hubert! beloved Hubert!" were on her lips; but they came no farther, for she had not strength to speak them. Another effort might have been more successful, and they, or something like them, might have found way had not the gentleman recovered his voice first, and resumed the conversation in a tone so chillingly reserved, that the timid, broken-spirited girl, had no strength left "to prick the sides of her intent," and lay her innocent heart open before him.

"In the name of Lady Elizabeth Norris let me entreat you, Miss Willoughby, not to remain in a situation so every way objectionable," he said. "My aunt and sister both are full of painful anxiety on your account, and the letter I have brought contains their earnest entreaties that you should immediately take up your residence with my aunt. Do not refuse this from any fear of embarrassment . . . of persecution from me. . . I shall probably go abroad . . . I shall probably join my friend Frederick at Paris. He did you great justice, Miss Willoughby; . . . and, but for me, perhaps . . . Forgive me! . . . I will no longer intrude on you! — forgive me! — tell me you forgive me, for all the pain I have caused you, and for more injury, perhaps, than you will ever know! I never knew how weak! — I fear I should say how unworthy — my character might become, till I knew you; . . . and to complete the hateful retrospect," he added, with bitterness, and rising to go, "to complete the picture of myself that I have henceforth to contemplate, I was coxcomb enough to fancy . . . But I am acting in a way that I should scorn a youth for who numbered half my years. . . Answer my aunt's letter, Miss Willoughby. . . answer it as if her contemptible nephew did not exist . . . he shall exist no longer where he can mar your fortune, or disturb your peace!"

Agnes looked at him as if her heart would break at hearing words so harsh and angry, when, losing at once all sense of

his own suffering, Colonel Hubert reseated himself, and, in the gentlest accent of friendship, alluded to the propriety of her immediately leaving London, and to the anxiety of her friends at Cheltenham to receive her.

"They are very, *very* good to me," said Agnes meekly; "and I shall be most thankful, Colonel Hubert, to avail myself of such precious kindness, if the old aunt, to whom I have written, in Devonshire, should refuse to save me from the necessity of being a burden on their benevolence."

"But shall you wait for this decision here, Miss Willoughby?"

"I have promised to do so," replied Agnes; "and as I may have an answer here on Thursday, I think, at latest, I would not risk the danger of offending her by putting it out of my power immediately to obey her commands, if she should be so kind as to give me any."

The eyes of Agnes were fixed for a moment on his as she concluded this speech, and there was something in the expression of that look that shook the sternness of his belief in her indifference. He rose again, and making a step towards her, said, with a violence of emotion that entirely changed the tone of his voice, —

"Agnes! . . . Miss Willoughby! . . . answer me one question. . . Should my aunt herself plead for me . . . could you, would you, be my wife?"

Agnes, equally terrified lest she should say too little or too much, faltered as she replied, "If it were possible, Colonel Hubert . . . could I indeed believe that your aunt, your sister, would not hate and scorn me. . ."

"You might! . . . You will let me believe it possible you could be brought to love me? . . . To love me, Agnes? . . . No! do not answer me . . . do not commit yourself by a single word! . . . Stay then here; . . . but do not leave the house! . . . Stay till . . . Yet, alas! I dare not promise it! . . . But you will not leave this house, Miss Willoughby, with any aunt, without letting me . . . my family, know where you may be found!"

"Oh no!" . . . said Agnes with a reviving hope, that if *they* must be parted, which this reference to her aunt and his *own doubtful* words made it but too probable would be the end of all, at least it would not be because he thought she was too

young to love him "Oh no!" she repeated; "this letter will not be left without an answer."

"And you will not stir from these rooms alone?" he replied, once more taking her hand.

"Not if you think it best," she answered, frankly giving hers, and with a smile, moreover, that ought to have set his heart at ease about her thinking him too old to love. And for the moment perhaps it did so, for he ventured to press a kiss upon that hand, and uttering a fervent "Heaven bless and guard you!" disappeared.

And Agnes then sat down to muse again. But what a change had now come o'er the spirit of her dream! Where was her abject misery? Where the desolation that had made her almost fear to look around and see how frightfully alone she was? Her bell was rung, her candles brought her, tea was served; and though there was a fulness and palpitation at the heart which prevented her taking it, or eating the bread and butter good-naturedly intended to atone for her un-tasted dinner, quite in the tranquil, satisfactory, and persevering manner that might have been wished, every thing seemed to dance before her eyes *en couleur de rose*, till at last, giving up the attempt to sit soberly at the tea table, she rose from her chair, clasped her hands with a look of grateful ecstasy to Heaven, and exclaimed aloud, "He loves me! Hubert loves me! Oh, happy, happy Agnes!"

"Did you call, miss?" said the maid entering, from having heard her voice as she passed up the stairs.

Agnes looked at her and laughed. "No, Susan," she replied; "I believe I was talking to myself."

"Well, that is funny," said the girl; "and I'm sure it is a pity such a young lady as you should have no one else to talk to. Shall I take the things away, miss?"

Once more left to herself, Agnes set about reading the letter, which hitherto had lain untouched upon the table, blushing as she opened it now, because it had not been opened before.

The first page was from Lady Elizabeth, and only expressed her commands, given in her usual peremptory tone, but nevertheless mixed with much kindness, that Agnes should leave London with as little delay as possible, and consider her house as her home till such time as an eligible situation could be

found, in which her own excellent talents might furnish her with a safer and more desirable manner of existence than any her aunt Barnaby could offer. The remainder of the letter was filled by Lady Stephenson, and expressed the most affectionate anxiety for her welfare; but she too referred to the hope of being able to find some situation that should render her independent; so that it was sufficiently evident that neither of them as yet had any idea that this independence might be the gift of Colonel Hubert.

"It is nonsense to suppose they will ever consent to it," thought Agnes; and this time her spirits were not so exalted as to make her breathe her thoughts aloud; "but I never can be so miserable again as I have been . . . it is enough happiness for any one person in this life . . . that every body says is not a happy one . . . it is quite enough to know that Hubert loves me. . . Oh Hubert! . . . noble Hubert! how did I dare to fix my fancy on thee? . . . Presumptuous! . . . But yet he loves me!"

And with this balm, acting like a gentle opiate upon her exhausted spirits, she slept all night, and dreamed of Hubert.

The four o'clock delivery of the post on the following day brought her this letter from her aunt Barnaby.

"DEAR AGNES,

"The brutality of these Cheltenham people is perfectly inconceivable. Mr. Crayton, my broker, and my poor father's broker before me, came to me as early as it was possible last night; and I explained to him fully, and without a shadow of reserve, the foolish scrape I had got into, which would have been no scrape at all if I had not happened to fall into the hands of a parcel of rascals. He undertook to get the sum necessary to release me by eleven o'clock this morning, which he did, good man, with the greatest punctuality....paid that villainous Simmons, got his receipt, and my discharge, when, just at the very moment when I was stepping into the coach that was to take me from this hateful place, up came the same two identical fellows that insulted us in Half-moon Street, and arrest me again at the suit of Wright....Such nonsense!.....As if I could not pay them all ten times over, as easy as buy a pot of porter. But they care no more for reason than a pig in a sty; so here I am shut up again till

that dear old man Crayton can come, and get through all the same tedious work again. You can't conceive how miserably dull I am; and what's particularly provoking, I gave over trying to have you in with me as soon as old Crayton told me I should be out by noon to-day; and therefore, Agnes, I want you to set off the very minute you receive this, and come to me for a visit. You may come to me for a visit, though I can't have you in without special leave. Mind not to lose your way; but it's uncommonly easy if you will only go by what I say. Set out the same way that we went to the church, you know, and keep on till you get to the Haymarket, which you will know by it's being written up. Then, when you've got down to the bottom of it, turn sharp round to your left, and just ask your way to the Strand; and when you have got there, which you will in a minute, walk on, on, on, till you come to the bottom of a steep hill, and then stop and ask some one to show you the way to the Fleet Prison. When you get there, any of the turnkeys will be able to show you to my room; and a comfort I'm sure it will be to see you in such a place as this. . . . And do, Agnes, buy as you come along, half a dozen cheesecakes and half a dozen queencakes, and a small jar, for about four or five shillings, of brandy cherries. . . . And what's a great comfort, I may keep you till it's dark, which is what they call shutting-up time, and then you can easy enough find your way back again by the gaslight, which is ten times more beautiful than day, all along the streets from one end of the town to the other. . . . Only think of that dirty scoundrel Morrison never coming near me. . . . after all that passed too, and all the wine he drank, shabby fellow! . . . There is one very elegant-looking man here that I meet in the passage every time I go to my bed-room. He always bows, but we have not spoken yet. Bring five sovereigns with you and be sure set off the moment you get this.

“Your affectionate aunt,

“MARTHA BARNABY.”

It needs not to say the sort of effect which the tone of this letter produced on a mind in itself delicate and unsunned as the bells of the valley lily, and filled to overflowing with the image of the noble Hubert. Yet there were other feelings that mingled with this deep disgust; she pitied her aunt Barnaby,

faded too. She remembered, when it was too late, that it was not Agnes's fault that she was living with Mrs. Barnaby ; and conscience told her, that if she had come forward, as she might and ought to have done, at the time of her brother's death, the poor child might have been saved from the chance of any moral resemblance to the object of her aversion, however much she might unhappily inherit the detestable Wisett beauty. Then, too, came the remembrance of the beautiful vision, whose caresses she had rejected when irritated almost to madness by the tauntings of Mrs. Barnaby ; and the idea that the punishment allotted to her in this world for this flagrant act of injustice was the being doomed never to behold that fair young creature more, lay with a daily increasing weight of melancholy on her spirits.

It was on the afternoon of a fine September day that the letter of Agnes reached her. As usual, she was sitting in her bower, and her flowers bloomed and her bees hummed about her as heretofore, but the sprightly black eye that used to watch them was greatly dimmed. She had almost wholly lost her relish for works of fiction, and reading a daily portion of the Bible, which she had never omitted in her life, was perhaps the only one of all her comfortable habits that remained unchanged.

It would be no easy matter to paint the state into which the perusal of Agnes's letter threw her. Self-reproach was lost in the sort of ecstasy with which she remembered how thrifflily she had hoarded her wealth, and how ample were the means she possessed to give protection and welcome to the poor orphan who thus sought a refuge in her bosom. All the strength and energy she had lost seemed to rush back upon her as her need called for them, . . . and there was more of courage and enterprise within that diminutive old woman than always falls to the lot of a six-foot-two dragoon.

Her resolution as to what she intended to do was taken in a moment, and without any weakening admixture of doubts and uncertainties as to when and how ; but she knew that she should want her strength, and must therefore husband it. Her step was, therefore, neither hurried nor unsteady as she returned to the house, and mounted to her sitting-room. *The first thing she did on entering it was to drink a glass of water, the next to indite a note to the postmaster at Silverton, ordering a chaise and four horses to be at Compton Bassett by day-*

break to take her the first stage towards London. She then rang her bell, gave her note to Peggy Wright, the farmer's youngest daughter, who was her constant attendant, and bade her request that her father, if in the house, would come to her immediately. There was enough in the unusual circumstances of a letter received, and a note sent, to excite the good farmer's curiosity, and he was in the presence of his landlady as quickly as she could herself have wished.

"Sit down, Farmer Wright," said Miss Compton, and the farmer seated himself.

"I must leave Compton Bassett to-morrow morning, Farmer Wright," she resumed. "My niece — my great niece. I mean, Miss Willoughby, has written me a letter, which determines me to go to London immediately for the purpose of taking charge of her myself."

"Sure-ly, Miss Compton, you bean't goen' to set off all by your own self for Lunnun?" exclaimed the farmer.

"Not if I can manage before night to get a couple of servants to attend me."

Farmer Wright stared; there was something quite new in Miss Betsy's manner of talking.

"You are a very active man, farmer, in the haymaking season," continued Miss Compton with a smile; "do you think, that to oblige and serve me, you could be as much on the alert for the next three or four hours as if you had a rick to save from a coming storm of rain?"

"That I wool!" replied Wright heartily. "Do you but bid me do, Miss Betsy, and I'll do it."

"Then go to your sister Appleby's, and inquire if her son William has left Squire Horton's yet."

"I need not go so far for that, Miss Compton; Will is down stairs with my missus at this very minute," said the farmer.

"That is fortunate! . . . He is not likely to go away directly, is he?"

"No, not he, Miss Betsy; he is come to have a crack with our young 'uns, and it's more likely he'll stay all night than be off in such a hurry."

"Then, in that case, have the kindness, Farmer Wright, to saddle a horse, while I write a line to the bank. . . . I want you to ride over to Silverton for me, to get some money."

of an hour, but with a heated face, and every appearance of having been in great activity.

"I ax your pardon, Mi-s Betsy, a thousand times!" said the good woman, wiping her face; "but Peggy's things, you know, Miss Compton, can't be like yours, all nicely in order in the drawers; and we must all wash and iron too before she can be ready. But here I am now to help you, and I can get your trunk ready in no time."

"I shall take very little with me, Mrs. Wright," replied the old lady, who seemed as much *au fait* of what she was about as if she had been in the habit of visiting London every year of her life; "nor must Peggy take much," she added gently, but with decision; "and getting her things washed and ironed must be done after we are gone. I shall let you know as soon as I can where the luggage that must follow us shall be addressed; and instead of washing and ironing, Mrs. Wright, I want you and one of the elder girls to assist me in making an inventory of every thing I leave behind. . . . orders concerning which you will also receive by the post."

Miss Compton, though a very quiet inmate, and one whose regular habits gave little trouble, was nevertheless a person of great importance at Compton Bassett; and her commands, thus distinctly expressed, were implicitly obeyed; so that before the usual hour of retiring for the night, every thing was arranged both for going and staying exactly as she had determined they should be.

It was singular to see with what unvacillating steadiness the feeble-locking old lady pursued her purpose; no obstacle or consequence sufficient to draw aside a thought from the main object she had in view, but was either removed or over by an impulse that seemed as irresistible as the train to rush along the rail-road, making clear, if it does not find it so.

A smart post-chaise, with four good horses abreast, and a smart post-boys, was at the door; and within ten minutes all adieux had been spoken, all luggage packed, and Miss Compton, who had never yet left her native place, proceeding full gallop towards the metropolis.

"Proceeding full gallop towards the metropolis," said William to the driver, "so you will be paid," and they did drive as boys so bargained to set off; and Miss Compton had shown equal quickness in her judgment in having secured the services of this Wil-

"And I'll do it," replied her faithful assistant, leaving the room.

Fortunately for her present convenience, Miss Compton always kept a deposit of about one hundred pounds in the bank at Silvertown in case of need, either for the purpose of making the loans which have been already mentioned as a principal feature in her works of charity, or for any accidental contingency. Beyond this, however, she had no pecuniary transactions there, as her habitual secrecy in all that concerned her money affairs made it desirable that her agent should be more distant. This fund, however, was quite sufficient for the moment, for, as will be easily believed, Miss Compton had no debts.

Farmer Wright speedily re-appeared, equipped for his ride.

"You will receive ninety-seven pounds sixteen and two-pence, Wright," said the spinster, giving her draught.

"Would it suit you best to receive the rent, Miss Betsy, before you set off?" said the farmer. "It will make no difference, you know, ma'am, if I pays it a fortnight beforehand."

"Not an hour, upon any account, Wright," replied his punctilious landlord. "I will leave written instructions with you as to what you are to do with it, and about all my other affairs in which you are concerned. And now send William Appleby to me."

This young man, the nephew of her tenant, and the ex-footman of a neighbouring family, had been favourably known to her from his childhood; and a very few minutes sufficed to enrol him as her servant, with an understanding that his livery was to be ordered as soon as they reached London.

This done, Mrs. Wright was next desired to attend her; and with very little waste of time or words, it was agreed between them, that if "father" made no objection (which both parties were pretty sure he would not), Peggy should be immediately converted into a waiting maid to attend upon herself and Miss Willoughby. This last arrangement produced an effect very likely to be destructive to all Miss Betsy's quiet, well-laid plans for preparation, for the news that Peggy was to set off next morning for London very nearly turned the heads of every individual in the house.

The mother of the family, however, so far recovered her senses as to appear again in Miss Compton's room at the end

of an hour, but with a heated face, and every appearance of having been in great activity.

"I ax your pardon, Miss Betsy, a thousand times!" said the good woman, wiping her face; "but Peggy's things, you know, Miss Compton, can't be like yours, all nicely in order in the drawers; and we must all wash and iron too before she can be ready. But here I am now to help you, and I can get your trunk ready in no time."

"I shall take very little with me, Mrs. Wright," replied the old lady, who seemed as much *au fait* of what she was about as if she had been in the habit of visiting London every year of her life; "nor must Peggy take much," she added gently, but with decision; "and getting her things washed and ironed must be done after we are gone. I shall let you know as soon as I can where the luggage that must follow us shall be addressed; and instead of washing and ironing, Mrs. Wright, I want you and one of the elder girls to assist me in making an inventory of every thing I leave behind. . . . orders concerning which you will also receive by the post."

Miss Compton, though a very quiet inmate, and one whose regular habits gave little trouble, was nevertheless a person of great importance at Compton Basett; and her commands, thus distinctly expressed, were implicitly obeyed; so that before the usual hour of retiring for the night, every thing was arranged both for going and staying exactly as she had determined they should be.

It was singular to see with what unvacillating steadiness this feeble-looking old lady pursued her purpose; no obstacle appeared of consequence sufficient to draw aside a thought from the main object she had in view, but was either removed or passed over by an impulse that seemed as irresistible as the steam that causes the train to rush along the rail-road, making the way clear, if it does not find it so.

At daybreak the Silverton post-chaise, with four good horses and two smart post-boys, was at the door; and within ten minutes afterwards all adieux had been spoken, all luggage stowed, and Miss Compton, who had never yet left her native county, was proceeding full gallop towards the metropolis.

"As you drive, so you will be paid," said William to the boys as they set off; and they did drive as boys so bargained with generally do. Miss Compton had shown equal quickness and good judgment in having secured the services of this Wil-

The poor old lady's high-wrought energies almost failed her now; and had not a chair stood near, she would hardly have saved herself from falling on the floor beside her niece. "Agnes! . . . poor child!" she said, "you thought I was too hard and too cruel to come near you? . . . I have been much to blame . . . oh! frightfully to blame! . . . Will you forgive me, dear one? . . . My poor pale girl! . . . You look ill, Agnes, very, very ill. . . . And is it not a fitting torment for me to see this fair bloodless cheek? . . . for did I not hate you for your rosy health?"

Agnes was indeed pale; and though not fainting, was so near it, that while her aunt uttered this passionate address, she had no power to articulate a word. But she laid her cheek on the old lady's hands; and there was something so caressing and so helpless in her attitude as she did this, that poor Miss Compton was entirely overcome, and wept aloud.

No sooner, however, had this first violent burst of emotion passed away, than the happiness such a meeting was calculated to afford to both of them was most keenly and delightfully felt. Miss Compton looked at Agnes, as the blood beautifully tinged her delicate cheek again, with such admiration and delight, that it seemed likely enough, notwithstanding her strong good sense on many points, that she might now fall into another extreme, and idolise the being she had so harshly thrust from her . . . while the object of this new and un-hoped-for affection seemed to feel it at her very heart, and to be cheered and warmed by it, like a tender plant receiving the first beams of the morning sun after the chilling coldness of the night.

At length Miss Compton remembered that she was not come there only to look at Agnes; and withdrawing her arms, which she had thrown around her, she said, . . . "Come, my own child . . . this is no roof for either of us. Have you much to remove? Is there more than a carriage can take, Agnes?"

"And will you take me with you now, aunt Betsy?" cried the delighted girl, springing up. "Wait but one moment, and all I have shall be ready . . . it is not much. . . . My books are packed, and my trunk too . . . the maid will help me."

"Ring the bell then, love, and let my servant take your packages down." Agnes obeyed . . . her trunk . . . aunt Betsy's original trunk, and the dear Empton book-box, were

lodged on the driving seat and the dickey of the carriage; and William was just mounting the stairs to say that all was ready, when another carriage was heard to stop, and another knocking resounded against the open street-door.

"Oh! it is *aunt Barnaby!*" cried Agnes in a voice of terror.

"Is it?" replied Miss Compton, in the lively tone of former days. "I shall be exceedingly glad to see her."

"Can you be in earnest, *aunt Betsy?*" said Agnes, looking very pale.

"Perfectly in earnest, my dear child," answered the old lady. "It will be greatly more satisfactory that she should be an eye-witness of your departure with me, than that you should go without giving her notice. . . . Perhaps she would say you had eloped and robbed the premises."

"Hush!" cried Agnes "she is here!"

Mrs. Barnaby's voice, at least, was already with them. It was, indeed the return of this lady which they had heard; and no sooner had she dismissed her hackney-coachman than she began questioning the servant of the house, who was stationed at the open door, expecting Miss Compton and her niece to come down.

"What carriage is that? Whose servant is that upon the stairs? You have not been letting the lodgings, I hope?" were the first words of the widow.

"Oh! dear no, ma'am!" replied the maid; "every thing is just as you left it."

"Then who is that carriage waiting for?"

"For a lady, ma'am, who is come to call on your young lady."

"My young lady! unnatural hussy! And what fine friends has she found out here, I wonder, to visit her? Be they who they will, they shall hear my opinion of her." And with these words, Mrs. Barnaby mounted the last stair, and entered the room.

The two unsnuffed tallow candles which stood on the table did not enable her at the first glance to recognise her aunt, who was wrapped in a long silk cloak, much unlike any garment she had ever seen her wear; but the sable figure of Agnes immediately caught her eye, and she stepped towards her with her arm extended, very much as if about to box her

ears. But it seemed that the action was only intended to intimate that she was instantly to depart, for, with raised voice and rapid utterance, she said, "How comes it, girl, that I find you still here? . . . Begone! . . . Never will I pass another night under the same roof with one who could so basely desert a benefactress in distress! . . . And who may this be that you have got to come and make merry with you, while I . . . and for your expenses too . . . Whoever it is, they had better show no kindness to you, . . . or they will be sure to repent of it."

Mrs. Barnaby then turned suddenly round to reconnoitre the unknown visiter. "Do you not know me, Mrs. Barnaby?" said Miss Compton demurely.

"My aunt Betsy! . . . Good God! ma'am, what brought you here?"

"I came to take this troublesome girl off your hands, Mrs. Barnaby: is not that kind of me?"

"That's the plan, is it?" retorted the widow bitterly. "Now I understand it all. Instead of coming to comfort me in my misery, she was employing herself in coaxing another aunt to make a sacrifice of herself to her convenience. Take her; and when you are sick and sorry, she will turn her back upon you, as she has done upon me!"

"Oh! do not speak so cruelly, aunt Barnaby!" cried Agnes, greatly shocked at having her conduct thus described to one whose love she so ardently wished to gain. . . . "Tell my aunt Compton what it was you asked of me, and let her judge between us."

"Shut the door, Agnes! . . ." said Miss Compton sternly; and then, re-seating herself, she addressed Mrs. Barnaby with an air of much anxiety and interest: "Niece Martha, I must indeed beg of you to tell me in what manner this young girl has conducted herself since she has been with you, for, I can assure you, much depends upon the opinion I shall now form of her. I have no longer any reason to conceal from you that my circumstances are considerably more affluent than anybody but myself and my man of business is aware of. . . . Nearly forty years of strict economy, niece Martha, have enabled me to realise a very respectable little fortune. It was I, and not *my tenant*, who purchased your poor father's moiety of *Compton Basett*; and as I have scarcely ever touched the rents, a little study of the theory of interest and compound interest will

prevent your being surprised, when I tell you that my present income is fifteen hundred per annum, clear of all outgoings whatever."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Barnaby, with an accent and a look of reverence, which very nearly destroyed the gravity of her old aunt.

"Yes, Mrs. Barnaby," she resumed, "such is my income. With less than this, a gentlewoman of a good old family, desirous of bringing forward a niece into the world in such a manner as to do her credit, could not venture to take her place in society; and I have therefore waited till my increasing revenues should amount to this sum before I declared my intentions, and proclaimed my heiress. Such being the case, you will not be surprised that I should be anxious to ascertain which of my two nieces best deserves my favour. I do not mean to charge myself with both. . . . Let that be clearly understood. . . . The doing so would entirely defeat my object, which is to leave one representative of the Compton Basset family with a fortune sufficient to restore its former respectability."

"And every body must admire such an intention," replied Mrs. Barnaby, in an accent of inexpressible gentleness; "and I, for one, most truly hope, that whoever you decide to leave it to, may deserve such generosity, and have a grateful heart to requite it with."

"That is just what I should wish to find," returned the spinster; "and before you came in, I had quite made up my mind that Agnes Willoughby should be the person; but I confess, Mrs. Barnaby, that what you have said alarms me, and I shall be very much obliged if you will immediately let me know what Agnes has done to merit the accusation of having *deserted her benefactress?*"

"It is but too easy to answer that, aunt Compton," replied the widow, "and I am sorry to speak against my own sister's child; . . . but truth is truth, and since you command me to tell you what I meant when I said she had deserted me, I will I have been arrested, aunt Compton, and that for no reason on the earth but because I was tempted to stay three or four days longer in London than I intended. Of course, I meant to go back to that paltry place, Cheltenham, and pay every farthing I owed there, the proof of which is that I have

paid every farthing, though it would have served them right to have kept them a year out of their money, instead of a month; . . . but that's neither here nor there . . . though there was no danger of my staying in prison, I was there for three days, and Agnes could not tell but I might have been there for ever; . . . yet, when I wrote her a most affectionate letter, begging her only to call upon me in my miserable solitude, she answered my petition, which might have moved a heart of stone, with a flat refusal. . . . Ask her if she can deny this?"

"What say you, Agnes? . . . Is this so?" said the old lady, turning to the party accused.

"Aunt Betsy!" . . . said Agnes, and then stopped, as if unwilling, for some reason or other, to say more.

"YES OR NO?" demanded Mrs. Barnaby, vehemently. "Did you refuse to come to me, or not?"

"I did," replied Agnes.

"I hope you are satisfied, aunt Compton?" cried the widow triumphantly. . . . "By her own confession, you perceive that I have told you nothing but the truth."

Agnes said nothing in reply to this, but loosening the strings of a silk bag which hung upon her arm, she took from it a small packet, and placed it in the hands of Miss Compton. "What have we got here?" said the spinster, sharply. . . . "What do you give me this for, child?"

"I wish you to read what is there, if you please, aunt," said Agnes. Miss Compton laid it on the table before her, while she sought for her spectacles and adjusted them on her nose; but, while doing this, she kept her eyes keenly fixed upon the little packet, and not without reason, for, had she turned from it for a single instant, Mrs. Barnaby, who shrewdly suspected its contents, would infallibly have taken possession of it.

"My coachman and horses will get tired of all this, I think," said Miss Compton; "however, as you say, niece Martha, truth is truth, and must be sought after, even if it lies at the bottom of a well. . . . This is a letter, and directed to you, Miss Agnes; . . . and this is the back of another, with some young-lady-like scrawling upon it. . . . Which am I to read first, pray?"

"The letter, aunt Betsy," replied Agnes.

"So be it," said the spinster with an air of great indifference; and drawing one of the candles towards her, and care-

fully snuffing it, she began clearly and deliberately reading aloud the letter already given, in which Mrs. Barnaby desired the presence of Agnes, and gave her instructions for her finding her way to the Fleet Prison. Having finished this, she replaced it quietly in its cover without saying a word, or even raising her eyes towards either of her companions; and taking the other paper, containing Agnes's reasons for non-compliance, read that through likewise, exactly in the same distinct tone, and replaced it, with an equal absence of all commentary, in the cover. She then rose, and walking close up to her elder niece, who proffered not a word, looking in her face with a smile that must have been infinitely more provoking than the most violent indignation, said, "Niece Martha! . . . the last time I saw you, if I remember rightly, you offered me some of your old clothes; but now you offer me none, which I consider as the more unkind, because, if you dressed as smart as you are now while in prison, you must most certainly wear very fine things when you are free. . . . And so, as you are no longer the kind niece you used to be, I don't think I shall come to see you any more. As for this young lady here, it appears to me that you have not been severe enough with her, Mrs. Barnaby. . . . I'll see if I can't teach her to behave better In prison or out of prison if I bid her come, we shall see if she dare look about her for such plausible reasons for refusing as she has given you. If she does, I'll certainly send her back to you, Mrs. Barnaby. Ring the bell naughty Agnes!"

The maid seemed to have been very near the door, for it instantly opened. "Tell my servants that I am coming," said the whimsical spinster, enacting the fine lady with excellent effect; and making a low, slow, and most ceremonious courtesy to the irritated, but perfectly overpowered Mrs. Barnaby, she made a sign to Agnes to precede her to the carriage, and left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

AGNES ELOPES WITH HER AUNT BETSY

‘Is it possible!’ cried Agnes, the moment that the door of the carriage was closed upon them, “is it possible that I am really under your protection, and going to your home, aunt Betsy?”

“To my temporary home, dear child, you are certainly going,” said the old lady, taking her hand; “but I hope soon to have one more comfortable for you, my Agnes!”

“Where I shall find the bower and the bees? Is it not so, aunt?”

“Not exactly . . . at least not at present. . . . But tell me, Agnes, don’t you think I was very gentle and civil to Mrs. Barnaby?”

“It was certainly very wise not to reproach her, poor woman, more directly. . . . But, oh! dearest aunt Betsy, how well you know her! If you had studied for a twelvemonth to find out how you might best have tormented her, you could have discovered no method so effectual as the making her first believe that you had a great fortune, and then that her own conduct had robbed her of your favour. “Poor aunt Barnaby! I cannot help pitying her!”

“You are tender-hearted, my dear, and a flatterer too You give me credit, I assure you, for a vast deal more cleverness than I possess: excepting on the subject of the old clothes which she offered me when we met in the cottage of Dame Sims, I attempted no jestings with her But tell me, Agnes, have you not suffered dreadfully from the tyranny and vulgar ignorance of this detestable woman? Has she not almost broken your young heart?”

“I have not been very happy with her, aunt Betsy,” replied Agnes gently; “but she speaks only truth when she says I have lived at her cost, and this ought to close my lips against speaking more against her than may be necessary to clear my own conduct in your eyes.”

Perhaps the old lady was a little disappointed at finding that *she was to have no good stories concerning the absurdities of the apothecary’s high-flying widow, as she called her; but, despite all the oddities of Miss Corompton, there was quite enough*

of the innate feeling of a gentlewoman within her to make her value Agnes the more for her promised forbearance. She threw her arm round her, and pressing her to her bosom, said,—

“ Let this feeling of Christian gentleness be extended to me also, Agnes, . . . for I have great need of it. This Martha Wisett the second, poor soul, was the first-born of her mother, and seems to have taken as her birthright all the qualities, bodily and mental, of her vulgar and illiterate dam. . . . But I have no such excuse, my child, for the obstinate prejudice with which my heart has been filled, and my judgment absolutely confounded. All you have suffered with this woman, Agnes, ought, in truth, to be laid to my charge. . . . I knew what she was, and yet I suffered you. . . . Let us try to forget it; and only remember, if you can, that I turned away from you for no other reason upon earth than because I feared you were not . . . exactly what I now find you. But here we are at home. How greatly must you want the healing feeling that home should bring! Poor dear! . . . When have you ever felt it?”

“ At Empton, aunt!” answered Agnes eagerly; and even though the carriage door was open, and the step let down, she added, “ The only home I ever loved I owed to you.”

Hastily as this word was said, it sunk with very healing effect into the heart of the self-reproaching old lady . . . it was answered by a cordial “ God bless you!” and hand in hand the very happy pair walked up the staircase together. The accomplished William had preceded them, and thrown open the door of aunt Betsy’s handsome drawing-room; and no apartment could offer an aspect of more comfort. The evening had all the chilliness of September when its sun is gone; and the small bright fire, with a sofa placed cosily near it, looked cheerily. Wax-lights on the chimney and tea-table gave light sufficient to show a large, exceedingly well-fitted up room; and a pretty young woman, neatly dressed, came forward to offer her services in the removal of cloaks and shawls.

Agnes looked round the room, and then turned to her aunt, as if tacitly demanding an explanation of what she saw. Miss Compton smiled, and answered the appeal by saying, “ Did you expect, dearest, that I should be able to bring my *farm-house* and my bees with me?”

"No, aunt Compton," replied Agnes, very gravely, "I did not expect that; . . . but . . ."

"Aunt Betsy — you must always call me aunt Betsy, Agnes. That was the appellation that your dear voice uttered so joyously when I entered the dark den in which I found you, and I shall never like any other as well . . . But don't be frightened because I have somewhat changed my mode of living, my dear child. I will not invite you to ramble through the streets of London, in order to visit me when I am in prison for debt. I know what my means are, Agnes — few ladies better — and I will never exceed them."

This was said very gravely, and the assurance was by no means unimportant to the tranquillity of the young heiress. The scenes she had recently passed through would have reconciled her to a farm-house, a cottage, a hut; so that the air of heaven blew untainted round it, and no livery-stable-keepers, or bailiff's followers, could find entrance there. But Miss Compton's words and manner set her heart at rest on that score, though they could not remove her astonishment, the involuntary expression of which, on her beautiful face, was by no means disagreeable to the novel-read aunt Betsy. It was just as it should be . . . beauty, goodness, misery, ill-usage, and all; and she felt most happily convinced that, if there were but a lover in the case, and such a one as, despite all obstacles, she could approve, she should to her dying day have the comfort of thinking that the moment which she had chosen for ceasing to accumulate, and beginning to spend, was the very best possible.

And this lover in the clouds. . . . Would Agnes open her heart to her on such a subject? . . . Had she any right to hope it? . . . Not yet, certainly not yet, thought Miss Compton as, the services of William over, and the tea-things removed, they drew nearer the fire; and she fixed her eyes anew on the beautiful face she so greatly loved to contemplate, partly because it was so beautiful, and partly because she could not trace in it the slightest resemblance to any member of the Wisett race.

But soft and peaceful as was now the expression of that face, there might occasionally be seen by an accurate observer *that indescribable* look of thoughtfulness in the eyes which *never arises* till the mind has been awakened, upon *some subject or other*, to emotions of deep interest. Miss Compton

was a very accurate observer, and saw, as plainly as Lavater himself could have done, that Agnes had learned to feel.

The romantic old lady would have given her right hand to possess her confidence, but she was determined not to ask for it.

"Do you think we shall be happy together, Agnes?" said she, in a voice which, when its cheerful tone was not exaggerated into the ironical levity in which she sometimes indulged, was singularly pleasing. "Do you think that you shall like to be my darling?"

"Yes, I do," replied Agnes, with the sudden bluntness of sincerity; "but I think I shall plague you sometimes, aunt Betsy."

"You have made up your mind to that already, have you?" returned Miss Compton, delighted at the playful tone in which she spoke; "then, in that case, I must make up my mind too, and contrive to make a pleasure of what you call a plague. How do you mean to begin, Agnes? . . . What will you do first? . . . Will you cry for the moon?"

"Will you try to get it for me if I do, aunt Betsy?" said Agnes, laughing.

"Yes, I will . . . that is, if you will let me know what sort of moon it is, and to what part of the heavens I must turn to find it. Jupiter, you know, has . . ."

"Oh! my moon is the highest and brightest of them all! . . ." said Agnes, with a sigh; and, after remaining silent for a moment, she added, . . . "Aunt Betsy, may I tell you every thing that has happened to me?"

"If you love me well enough to do this, my child," said the delighted old lady, while, nevertheless, a tear glistened in her clear black eye,—"if you love me well enough, I shall feel that I have not given up my bees and my flowers for nothing."

Agnes drew nearer, and after a moment's hesitation, began.

"I believe that all young ladies' histories have something about a gentleman in them, and so has mine . . ."

"A young gentleman, I hope, Agnes?" interrupted the aunt, with a smile.

Agnes coloured a little, but replied, "He is not so very young, aunt Betsy, as to make his youth his most remarkable quality."

"Very well, that is all quite right; he ought to be older than you, my dear Go on."

"When I was at Clifton, aunt Betsy, I was often in company with Colonel Hubert"

"A colonel? That sounds very respectable; he was the father, I suppose, of ~~THE~~ gentleman?"

"No, indeed," replied Agnes, with some vexation; "he is himself the only gentleman that I have any thing to say about, and his sister says that he will be a general next month."

"Indeed! A general? General Hubert! a very eligible acquaintance, I have no doubt. . . . I should hardly have hoped you could have had the good luck to meet with such among the friends of your aunt Barnaby."

"An eligible acquaintance! Oh! aunt, you don't understand me at all! But I will tell you every thing. Colonel Hubert is I can't describe him. . . . I hope you will see him, aunt Betsy, and then you will not wonder, perhaps, that I should have thought him, from the very first moment I saw him, the only person in the world"

Agnes stopped short; but Miss Compton seemed to think she had finished her phrase very properly.

"And what did he think of you, my dear? this young colonel?"

"Colonel Hubert never said any thing about it at Clifton," replied Agnes, blushing; "but yet I thought—I hoped he liked me, though I knew it did not signify whether he did or not, for he is one of a very distinguished family who could never, I imagined, think seriously of any one living with with my aunt Barnaby. But at Cheltenham I became acquainted with his aunt, Lady Elizabeth Norris, and his sister, Lady Stephenson, and they were very, *very* kind to me; and when I came to London with my aunt Barnaby in this wild manner, they were very anxious about me, and made me promise to write to them. . . . But before I thought they could know any thing about her being taken to prison the very day indeed that she went there, in the evening, while I was sitting in that dismal room, just as you found me to-night Colonel Hubert Oh! aunt Betsy the *sight of you* did not surprise me more Colonel Hubert *walked in.*"

"That was hardly right, though, Agnes, if he knew you were alone."

"He brought a letter from his aunt and sister, most kindly asking me to take shelter with them immediately; . . . and I am quite sure that when he came he had no intention of speaking of any thing but that. . . . But I believe I looked very miserable, and his generous heart could not bear it, so he told me that he loved me, and asked me to be his wife."

"It *was* generous of him at such a dreadful moment," said the spinster, her eyes again twinkling through tears. . . . "And how did you answer him, my love?"

"I told him," replied Agnes, trembling and turning pale as she spoke, "I told him that I could never be his wife!"

"Why, my dear, I thought you said," . . . cried the old lady, looking much disappointed, . . . "I thought you said you admired him of all things, and I am sure he seems to have deserved it; but I suppose you thought he was too old for you?"

"No! no! no!" replied Agnes vehemently . . . "He is young enough for me to love him, oh! so dearly! . . . It was because I could not bear that he should marry so beneath himself . . . it was because I thought his aunt and sister would resent it . . ."

"Humph! . . . That was very generous on your part too; but I suppose he knows best. . . . And what did he say then, Agnes?"

"Oh! aunt Betsy! . . . he said exactly as you did . . . he said that he was too old for me to love him; . . ." and, remembering the agony of that moment, she hid her face in her hands and wept.

Miss Compton looked at her with pitying eyes; and, after a moment, said, "And so you parted, Agnes?"

"Yes!" she replied, removing her hands. "It was almost so, and yet not quite. . . . I could not tell him, you know, how dearly, how very dearly, I loved him! . . . that was impossible! . . . but I said something about his sister and his aunt; and then . . . oh! I shall never forget him! . . . something like hope . . . pray, do not think me vain, aunt Betsy,—but it *was* hope that shot into his eye again, and changed the whole expression of his face; . . . yet he said no more about his love, and only asked me to promise never to leave the shelter of that roof till I heard from his aunt

again. . . . And I did promise him. . . . But could I keep it, aunt? . . . It would have been obeying him in words, and not in spirit. . . . And now I'm coming to my reason for telling you all this so very soon. . . . What shall I say to them now? How shall I write to them?"

It seemed that Miss Compton did not find this a very easy question to answer, for she took many minutes to consider of it. At length she said, . . . "As to setting right the love part of the affair, you need not alarm yourself, my dear. . . . there will be no great difficulty in that. . . . If you know your own mind, and really are in love with a general, instead of an ensign, I don't see why you should be contradicted, though it is a little out of the common way. . . . He is a gentleman, and that is the only point upon which I could have been very strict with you. . . . But there is another thing, Agnes, in which you must please to let me have my own way. . . . Will you promise me?"

"How can there be any way but yours in what concerns me, dear aunt Betsy?"

"Bless you, my dear! . . . I will not be a tyrant. . . . at least not a very cruel tyrant; but my happiness will be injured for the rest of my life, Agnes, if the next time you see this gentleman and his family, it is not in such a manner as to make them perceive, without the necessity of their listening to an old woman's long story about it, that you are not an unworthy match for him in any way. . . . Let this be managed, and every thing will end well. . . . There will be no risk of your witnessing, either in the words or looks of these noble ladies whom you call your friends, any struggle between their partiality for you and their higher hopes for him. He will ever remember with pleasure that he waited not for this to offer you his hand and heart; and trust me you will never remember with sorrow that you did wait for it before you accepted him. Do you agree with me?"

"Indeed I do!" fervently replied Agnes. "But could they see me at this moment, would not your wish be answered? Could they doubt for a moment, while seeing you, and seeing the style of all about you, that I am something more than the poor hopeless dependant of Mrs. Barnaby?"

"That is not it. . . . That would not do at all, child," replied the old lady sharply. "It shall not be the poor dependant of any body that this noble-hearted Colonel Holmes

shall come to woo. Love him as much as you will, the world may say, and his family may think too, that his rank and station led you to accept him. I will save you both from this danger. Colonel Hubert shall not try his chance with you again till you are the independent possessor of fifteen hundred pounds a year. When I die, Agnes, if you behave well in the interim, I will bequeath my bees to you, and all the furniture of my two pretty rooms at Compton Bassett, as well as all the reserved rents in the shape of allowances, coals, wood, attendance, and the like, which will be mine while I live. This, my dear, shall come to you in the way of legacy, in case I continue to be pleased with your behaviour; but there is no way for me to atone for the injury I have done to the representative of my family by suffering her to remain six months with Mrs. Barnaby, but making her at once the independent possessor of the Compton property."

"My dear, dear aunt!" said Agnes, most unfeignedly distressed, "there can be no occasion at this moment to talk of your doing what, in my poor judgment, would be so very wrong. . . . Should I be so happy as to make Colonel Hubert known to you, I would trust to him to discuss such subjects. . . . Oh! what delight, aunt Betsy, for you to have such a man for your friend! . . . and all owing to me!"

There was something so ingenuous, so young, so unquestionably sincere in this burst of feeling, that the old lady was greatly touched by it. "You are a sweet creature, Agnes," she replied, "and quite right in telling me not to discuss any matters of business with you. . . I shall touch on no such subjects again, for I see they are totally beyond your comprehension. Nevertheless, I must have my way about not introducing myself to Colonel Hubert's family, or himself either, in lodgings. Write to your kind friends, my dear; tell them that your old aunt Compton has left her retirement to take care of you, and tell them also that she feels as she ought to do. . . But, no; you write your own feelings, and I will write mine. . . But this must be to-morrow, Agnes; . . . it is past twelve o'clock, love. See! that gay thing on the chimney-piece attests it. . . I must show you to your room, my guest; hereafter I shall be yours, perhaps."

Peggy being summoned, the two ladies were lighted to the rooms above. . . These were in a style of great comfort, and even elegance; but one being somewhat larger than the other.

and furnished with a dressing-room, it was in this that Agnes found her trunk and book-box; and it was here that, after seeing that her fire burned brightly, and that Peggy was standing ready to assist in undressing her, the happy Miss Compton embraced, blessed, and left her to repose.

It was a long time, however, before Agnes would believe that any thing like sleep could visit her eyes that night. What a change, what an almost incredible transition, had she passed through since her last sleep! It was more like the operation of a magician's wand than the consequence of human events. From being a reprobated outcast, banished from the roof that sheltered her, she had become the sole object of love and care to one who seemed to have it in her power to make life a paradise to her. How many blissful visions floated through her brain before all blended together in one general consciousness of happy security, that at last lulled her to delicious sleep! She was hardly less sensible than her somewhat proud aunt of the pleasure which a re-union with her Cheltenham friends, under circumstances, so changed, would bring; and her dreams were of receiving Lady Elizabeth Norris and her niece in a beautiful palace on the shores of a lovely lake, while Colonel Hubert stood smiling by to watch the meeting.

CHAPTER VIII.

AGNES APPEARS LIKELY TO PROFIT BY THE CHANGE OF AUNTS.

THE first waking under the consciousness of new, and not yet familiar happiness, is perhaps one of the most delightful sensations of which we are susceptible. Agnes had closed her eyes late, and it was late when she opened them, for Peggy had already drawn her window curtains; and the gay hangings and large looking-glasses of the apartment met her eyes at the first glance with such brilliant effect, that she fancied for an instant she must still be dreaming. But by degrees all the delightful truth returned upon her mind. Where was the blank, cold isolation of the heart, with which her days were used to rise and set? Where were the terrors amidst which she lived, lest her protectress should expose *herself* by some monstrous, new absurdity? Where was the *hopeless* future, before which she had so often wept and

trembled? Was it possible that she was the same Agnes Willoughby who had awoke with such an aching heart, but four-and-twenty hours ago? . . . All these questions were asked, and gaily answered, before she had resolution to spring from her bed, and change her delightful speculations for a more delightful reality.

Notwithstanding the various fatigues of the preceding day, Miss Compton was not only in the drawing-room, but her letter to Lady Elizabeth Norris was already written on the third side of a sheet of letter-paper, thus giving Agnes an opportunity of explaining every thing before her own lines should meet her ladyship's eye.

The meal which has been slandered as "lazy, lounging, and most unsocial," was far otherwise on the present occasion. The aunt and niece sat down together, each regaling the eyes of the other with a countenance speaking the most heartfelt happiness; and while the old lady indulged herself with sketching plans for the future, the young one listened as if her voice were that of Fate, declaring that she should never taste of sorrow more.

"The carriage will be here at twelve, Agnes," said Miss Compton, "to take us into what our books tell us is called THE CITY, as if it were the city of cities, and about which I suppose you and I are equally ignorant, seeing that you never did take that pleasant little walk the dowager Mrs. Barnaby so considerably sketched out for you. So now we shall look at it together. But don't fancy, my dear, that any such idle project as looking at its wonders is what takes me there now. . . . I have got a broker, Agnes, as well as the widow, and it is quite as necessary to my proceedings as to hers that I should see him. But we must not go till our partnership letter is ready for the post. Here is my share of it, Agnes . . . read it to me; and if it meets your approbation, sit down and let your own precede it."

The lines written by Miss Compton were as follow: -

"MADAM,

"Permit a stranger, closely connected by the ties of blood to Agnes Willoughby, to return her grateful thanks for kindness extended to her at a moment when she greatly needed it. That she should so have needed it, will ever be a cause of

self-reproach to me : nor will it avail me much, either in my own opinion or in that of others, that the same qualities in our common kinswoman, Mrs. Barnaby, which produced the distress of Agnes, produced in me the aversion which kept me too distant to perceive their effects on her respectability and happiness.

“ I am, Madam,

∴ Your grateful and obedient servant,

“ ELIZABETH COMPTON.”

Agnes wrote : —

“ MY KIND AND GENEROUS FRIENDS,

“ Lady Elizabeth ! . . . Lady Stephenson ! I write to you, as I never dared hope to do, from under the eye and the protection of my dear aunt Compton. It is to her I owe all the education I ever received, and, I might add, all the happiness too, . . . for I have never known any happy home but that which her liberal kindness procured for me during five years spent in the family of my beloved instructress Mrs. Wilmot. For the seven months that have elapsed since I quitted Mrs. Wilmot, my situation, as you, my kind friends, know but too well, has been one of very doubtful respectability, but very certain misery. My aunt Compton blames herself for this ; but you, if I should ever be so happy as to make you know my aunt Compton, will blame me. Her former kindness ought to have given me courage to address her before, even though circumstances had placed me so entirely in the hands of Mrs. Barnaby as to make the separation between us fearfully wide. But, thank God ! all this unhappiness is now over. I *did* apply to her at last, and the result has been the converting me from a very hopeless, friendless, and miserable girl (as I was when you first saw me), into one of the very happiest persons in the whole world. I have passed through some scenes, from the remembrance of which I shall always shrink with pain ; but there have been others . . . there have been points in my little history, which have left an impression a thousand times deeper, and dearer too, than could ever have been produced on any heart unsoftened by calamity. And must it not ever be accounted among my best sources of happiness, that the regard which can never cease to be the most precious, as well as the *proudest boast of my life*, was expressed under circumstances which *most persons* would have appeared so strongly against me ?

“ My generous friends ! May I hope that the affection shown to me in sorrow will not be withdrawn now that sorrow is past ? May I hope that we shall meet again, and that I may have the great happiness of making my dear aunt known to you ? She is all kindness, and would take me to Cheltenham, that I might thank you in person for the aid so generously offered in my hour of need, but I fear poor Mrs. Barnaby’s adventures will for some time be too freshly remembered there for me to wish to revisit it.”

When Agnes had written thus far, she stopped. “ Where shall I tell them, aunt Betsy, that we are going to remain ? ” she said “ If if Colonel Hubert ” and she stopt again.

“ If Colonel Hubert and what then, Agnes ? ”

“ Why, if Colonel Hubert were to pay us a visit, aunt Betsy, I cannot help thinking he would understand me better now than when I was so dreadfully overpowered by the feeling of my desolate condition Don’t you think so ? ”

“ I think it very probable he might, my dear ; and as to your sensible question, Agnes, of where we are going to be, I think you must decide it yourself. We have both declared against Cheltenham, and for reasons good Where then should you best like to go ? ”

“ To Clifton, aunt Betsy ! It was there I saw him first, and there, too, I was most kindly treated by friends who, I believe, pitied me because because I did not seem happy, I suppose Oh ! I would rather go to Clifton than any place in the world excepting Empton.”

“ And to Empton we cannot go just at present, Agnes it would be too much like running out of the world again, which I have no wish at all to do. To Clifton, therefore, we will go, dear child, and so you may tell your good friends.”

Agnes gave no other answer than walking round the table, and imprinting a kiss upon the forehead of her happy aunt. . . . Then resuming her writing, she thus concluded her letter : —

“ My aunt Compton, as soon as she has concluded some business which she has to settle in London, will go to Clifton where, I believe, we shall stay for some months ; and should

any of your family happen again to be there, I may perhaps be happy enough to see them. With gratitude to all, I remain ever your attached and devoted

“AGNES WILLOUGHBY.”

Poor Agnes! . . . She was terribly dissatisfied with her letter when she had written it. Not all her generalisations could suffice to tell him, *THE HIM*, the only mortal *HIM* she remembered in the world, — not all her innocent little devices to make it understood that *he* was included in all her gratitude and love, as well as in her invitation to Clifton, made it at all clear that she wanted Colonel Hubert to come and offer to her again.

Yet what could she say more? . . . She sat with her eye fixed on the paper, and a face full of meaning, though what that meaning was it might not be very easy to decide.

“What is my girl thinking of?” said Miss Compton.

“I am thinking,” replied Agnes, and she shook her head, “I am thinking that Colonel Hubert will never understand from this letter, aunt Betsy, how very much I want to see him again.”

“That is very true, my dear.”

“Is there any thing else I could say to make him know how greatly he mistook me when he fancied I said no from my want of love?”

“Oh yes! my dear, certainly.”

“Tell me then, my dear, dear aunt! . . . I feel as if I had no power to find a word . . . tell me what I shall say to him.”

“You may say many things . . . For instance, . . . you may say, Tell my beloved Colonel Hubert . . .”

“Oh! aunt Betsy! . . . aunt Betsy! you are laughing at me,” cried Agnes, looking at her very gravely, and with an air of melancholy reproach.

“So I am, my dear: an old spinster of three score is but a poor confidant in matters of this sort . . . But if you seriously ask for my advice, I will give it, such as it is. Let our letter go just as it is, without any addition or alteration whatever. If Colonel Hubert sees this letter, as you seem to expect, and if he loves you as you deserve to be loved, he will find food *enough* for hope therein to carry him further than from one *end of Gloucestershire* to the other . . . If he does not see it,

put what you will in it he would learn nothing thereby. . . . But if, seeing it, he determines to sit quietly down under your refusal then let him ; I, for one, should feel no wish to become better acquainted with the gentleman."

Agnes said no more, but folded the letter, and directed it to Lady Elizabeth Norris, Cheltenham.

"Now, aunt, I have folded up Colonel Hubert, and put him out of sight till he shall choose to bring himself forward again. . . . I will tease you no more about him. . . . Shall I put my bonnet on? The carriage has been waiting for some time."

"My darling Agnes!" said the old lady, looking fondly at her, "how little I deserve to find you so exactly what I wished you should be! You are right ; we will talk no more of this Colonel Hubert till he has himself declared what part he means to play in the drama before us. We shall be at no loss for subjects. . . . Remember how much we have to lettle between us! our establishment, our equipage, our wardrobes, all to be decided upon, modelled, and provided. Get ready, dearest ; the sooner we get through our business, the earlier we shall be at Clifton ; and who knows which part of our *dramatis personæ* may arrive there first?"

A happy smile dimpled the cheek of Agnes as she ran out of the room to equip herself, and in a few minutes the two ladies were *en route* towards the city.

"What makes you wear such very deep mourning, my dear?" said Miss Compton, fixing her eyes on the perennial black crape bonnet of her companion. "Is it all for the worthy apothecary of Silverton? But that can't be either ; for now I think of it, his charming widow had half the colours of the rainbow about her What does it mean, Agnes?"

Agnes looked out of the window to conceal a smile, but recovering her composure, answered, "I have never been out of mourning, aunt, since Mr. Barnaby died. . . . There was a great deal of black not worn out, and as it made no difference to me"

"Oh! monstrous!" interrupted Miss Compton. "I see it all: while she wantons about like a painted butterfly, she has thrown her chrysalis-case upon you, my pretty Agnes, in the hope of making you look like a grub beside her.

. . . . Is it not so?"

"Oh no! . . . my aunt Barnaby loves dress certainly, . . . and greatly dislikes black, and so . . ."

"And so you are to wear it for her? . . . Well, Agnes, you shan't abuse her, if you think it a sin . . . God forbid! . . . But do not refuse to let me into a few of her ways. . . . Did she ever ask you to put on her widow's cap, my dear? It might have saved the expense of nightcaps at least."

* * * * *

It was almost a cruelty in Agnes to conceal the many characteristic traits of selfish littleness which she had witnessed in her widowed aunt from the caustic contemplation of her spinster one, for she would have enjoyed it. But it was so much in her nature to do so, that dearly as she would have loved to amuse aunt Betsy, and give scope to her biting humour on any other theme, she gave her no encouragement on this; so, by degrees, all allusion to Mrs. Barnaby dropped out of their discourse; and if, from time to time, some little sample of her peculiarities peeped forth involuntarily in speaking of the past, the well-schooled old lady learned to enjoy them in silence, and certainly did not love her niece the less for the restraint thus put upon her.

* * * * *

Considering how complete a novice our spinster practically was as to every thing concerning the vast Babylon called London, she contrived to go where she wished and where she willed with wonderfully few blunders. It was all managed between William and herself, and Agnes marvelled at the ease with which much seemingly important business was transacted.

The carriage was stopped before a very dusky-looking mansion at no great distance from the Exchange, within the dark passage of which William disappeared for some moments, and then returning, opened the carriage door, and, without uttering a word, gave his arm to assist Miss Compton to descend.

"I will not keep you waiting long, my dear," she said; and, without further explanation, followed her confidential attendant into the house. In about half an hour she returned, accompanied by a bald-headed, yellow-faced personage, who, somewhat to the surprise of Agnes, mounted the carriage after her, and placed himself as *bockin* between them. "To the Bank," was the word of command then given; and in a moment they again stopped, and Agnes was once more left alone.

The interval during which she was thus left was this time

considerably longer than the last, and she had long been tired of watching the goers and comers, all bearing, however varied their physiognomy, the same general stamp of busy, anxious interest upon their brows, before the active old lady and her bald-headed acquaintance reappeared.

The old gentleman handed her into the carriage, and then took his leave amidst a multitude of obsequious bows, and assurances that her commands should always be obeyed at the shortest notice, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*.

"Agnes!" . . . said the old lady, as soon as she had exchanged a few words with William as to where she next wished to go, — "Agnes! I look to you to supply the place of my bees and my flowers, and I do not much fear that I shall lament the exchange; but you must not continue to be dight in this grim fashion; it might be soothing to the feelings of Mr. Barnaby's fond widow, but to me it is very sad and disagreeable . . . And so, my dear, here is wherewithal to change it."

During the whole of this speech Miss Compton had been employed in extracting a pocket-book of very masculine dimensions from her pocket; and having at length succeeded, she opened it, drew forth two bank-notes of twenty-five pounds each, and laid them in the lap of her niece.

Agnes took them up, and looked at them with unfeigned astonishment. "My dear aunt," she said, "I am afraid you will find me a much younger and more ignorant sort of girl than you expected . . . I shall no more know what to do with all this money than a child of five years old. You forget, aunt Betsy, that I have never had any money of my own since I was born, and I really do not understand any thing about it."

"This is a trouble of a new and peculiar kind, my dear, and I really don't remember, in all my reading, to have found a precedent for it . . . What shall we do, Agnes? . . . Must you always wear this rusty-looking black gown, because you don't know how to buy another?"

"Why, no, aunt . . . I don't think that will be necessary either; but don't you think it would be better for you to buy what you like for me? . . . It won't be the first time, aunt Betsy. I have not forgotten when my pretty trunk was opened by Mrs. Wilmot, . . . or how very nicely every

thing was provided for the poor ragged little girl who never before, as long as she could remember, had possessed any thing beside threadbare relics, cobbled up to suit her dimensions. . . . It was you who thought of every thing for me then . . . and I'm quite sure you love me a great deal better now ;” and Agnes placed the notes in Miss Compton's hands as she spoke.

“ I had prepared myself for a variety of new occupations,” replied the spinster ; “ but choosing the wardrobe of an elegant young lady was certainly not one of them. . . . However, my dear, I have no objection to show you that my studies have prepared me for this too Nothing like novel-reading, depend upon it, for teaching a solitary recluse the ways of the world. You shall see how ably I will expend this money, Agnes ; but do not turn your head away, and be thinking of something else all the time, because it is absolutely necessary, I do assure you, that a young lady in possession of fifteen hundred a year should know how to buy herself a new bonnet and gown.”

The value of Miss Compton's literary researches was by no means lowered in the estimation of Agnes by the results of the three hours which followed ; for though there were moments in which her thoughts would spring away, in spite of all she could do to prevent it, from discussions on silks and satins to a meditation on her next interview with Colonel Hubert, she was nevertheless sufficiently present to what was passing before her eyes to be aware that an old lady, who has herself lived in a “ gogram gown ” for half a century, may be capable of making a mighty pretty collection of finery for her niece, provided that she has paid proper attention to fashionable novels, and knows how to ask counsel, as to what *artistes* to drive to, from so intelligent an *aide-de-camp* as William.

In short, by the united power of the money and the erudition she had hoarded, Miss Compton contrived, in the course of a fortnight, to make as complete a change in the equipments of Agnes as that performed of yore upon Cinderella by her god-mother. Nor was her own wardrobe neglected ; she had no intention that the rusticity of her spinster aunt should draw as many eyes on Agnes as the gaudiness of her widowed one, and *proved herself* as judicious in the selection of sable satins and velvets for herself, as in the choice of all that was most *becoming and elegant* for the decoration of her lovely niece.

Never, certainly, was an old lady more completely happy than the eccentric, proud, warm-hearted aunt Betsy, as, with a well-filled purse, she drove about London, and found every thing she deemed suitable to the proper setting forth of her heiress ready to her hand or her order. She could not, indeed, have a carriage built for her . . . she could not afford time for it ; . . . but William, the indefatigable William, ransacked Long Acre from one end to the other, till he had discovered an equipage as perfect in all its points as any order could have made it ; and on this the well-instructed Miss Compton, whose heraldic lore was quite sufficient to enable her with perfect accuracy to blazon her own arms, had her lozenge painted in miniature ; which being all that was required to render the neat equipage complete, this portion of their preparation did not cause any delay.

To Miss Peters Agnes wrote of all the unexpected good which had befallen her, with much freer confidence than she could indulge in when addressing the relations of Colonel Hubert. Her friend Mary already knew the name of " Miss Compton, of Compton Basett," and no fear of appearing boastful rendered it necessary for her to conceal how strangely the aspect of her worldly affairs was changed.

To her, and her good-natured mother, was confided the task of choosing lodgings for them ; and so ably was this performed, that exactly in one fortnight and three days from the time Colonel Hubert had left Agnes so miserably alone in Mrs. Barnaby's melancholy lodgings in Half-Moon Street, she was established in airy and handsome apartments in the Mall of Clifton, with every comfort and elegance about her that thoughtful and ingenious affection could suggest to make the contrast more striking.

The happiness of this meeting with the kind friends who had conceived so warm an affection for her, even when presented by Mrs. Barnaby, was in just proportion to the hopeless sadness with which she had bid them farewell ; and the reception of her munificent aunt among them, with the cordial good understanding which mutually ensued, did all that fate and fortune could do to atone for the suffering endured since they had parted.

CHAPTER IX.

BRINGS US BACK, AS IT OUGHT, TO MRS. BARNABY.

IT may be thought, perhaps, that the vexed, and, as she thought herself, the persecuted Mrs. Barnaby, had sufficiently tried what a prison was, to prevent her ever desiring to find herself within the walls of such an edifice again; but such an opinion, however likely to be right, was nevertheless wrong; for no sooner had the widow recovered from the fit of rage into which the triumphant exit of Miss Compton had thrown her, and settled herself on her solitary sofa, with no better comforter or companion than a cup of tea modified with sky-blue milk, than the following soliloquy (though she gave it not breath) passed through her brain.

“Soh! . . . Here I am then, after six months’ trial of the travelling system, and a multitude of experiments in fashionable society, just seven hundred pounds poorer than when I set out, and without having advanced a single inch towards a second marriage. . . . This will never do! . . . My youth, my beauty, and my fortune will all melt away together before the object is obtained, unless I change my plans, and find out some better mode of proceeding.”

Here Mrs. Barnaby sipped her vile tea, opened her work-box that she had been constrained to leave so hastily, ascertained that the exquisite collar she was working had received no injury during her absence, and then resumed her meditations.

“Heigh ho! . . . It is most horribly dull, sitting in this way all by one’s-self . . . even that good-for-nothing, stupid, ungrateful Agnes was better to look at than nothing; . . . and even in that horrid Fleet there was some pleasure in knowing that there was an elegant, interesting man, to be met in a passage now and then . . . whose eyes spoke plainly enough what he thought of me. . . . Poor fellow! . . . His being in misfortune ought not to produce ill-will to him in a generous mind! . . . How he looked as he said ‘Adieu, then, madam! . . . With you vanishes the last ray of light that will ever reach my heart!’ . . . And I am sure he said *exactly what he felt*, and no more. . . . Poor O’Donagough!
 . . . My heart aches for him!”

And here she fell into a very piteous and sentimental mood indeed. Had her soliloquy been spoken out as loud as words could utter it, nobody would have heard a syllable about love, marriage, or any such nonsense; her heart was at this time altogether given up to pity, compassion, and a deep sense of the duties of a Christian; and before she went to bed she had reasoned herself very satisfactorily into the conviction that, as a tender-hearted woman and a believer, it was her bounden duty, now that she had got out of trouble herself, to return to the Fleet for the purpose of once more seeing Mr. O'Donagough, and inquiring whether it was in her power to do any thing to serve him before she left London.

Nothing more surely tends to sooth the spirits and calm the agitated nerves than an amiable and pious resolution, taken, as this was done, during the last waning hours of the day, and just before the languid body lays itself down to rest. Mrs. Barnaby slept like a top after coming to the determination that, let the turnkeys think what they would of it, she would call at the Fleet Prison, and ask to see Mr. O'Donagough the following morning.

The following morning came, and found the benevolent widow steadfast in her purpose; and yet, to her honour be it spoken, it was not without some struggles with a feeling which many might have called shame, but which she conscientiously condemned as pride, that she set forth at length upon her adventurous expedition.

"Nothing, I am sure," . . . it was thus she reasoned with herself, . . . "nothing in the whole world could induce me to take such a step, but a feeling that it was my duty. Heaven knows I have had many follies in my day—I don't deny it; I am no hardened sinner, and that blessed book that he lent me has not been a pearl thrown to swine. '*The Sinner's Reward!*' . . . what a comforting title! . . . I don't hope ever to be the saint that the pious author describes, but I'm sure I shall be a better woman all my life for reading it; . . . and the visiting this poor O'Donagough is the first act by which I can prove the good it has done me!"

Then came some doubts and difficulties respecting the style of toilet which she ought to adopt on so peculiar an occasion. "It won't do for a person looking like a woman of fashion to drive up to the Fleet Prison, and ask to see such a man as O'Donagough. . . . He is too young and handsome to make

it respectable. . . . But, after all, what does it signify what people say? And as for my bonnet, I'll just put my Brussels lace veil on my black and pink; that will hide my ringlets, and make me look more matronly."

In her deep lace veil then, and with a large silk cloak which concealed the becoming gaiety of her morning dress, Mrs. Barnaby presented herself before the gates she had so lately passed, and in a very demure voice said to the keeper of it, "I wish to be permitted to see Mr. O'Donagough."

The fellow looked at her and smiled. "Well, madam," he replied, "I believe there will be no difficulty about that. Walk on, if you please You'll find them as can send you forward."

A few more barriers passed, and a few more well-amused turnkeys propitiated, and Mrs. Barnaby stood before a door which she knew as well as any of them opened upon the solitary abode of the broken-hearted but elegant Mr. O'Donagough. The door was thrown open for her to enter; but she paused, desiring her usher to deliver her card first, with an intimation that she wished to speak to the gentleman of business. She was not kept long in suspense; for the voice of the solitary inmate was heard from within, saying in soft and melancholy accents, "It is very heavenly kindness! Beg her to walk in." And in she walked, the room-door being immediately closed behind her.

Mr. O'Donagough was a very handsome man of about thirty years of age, with a physiognomy and cerebral development which might have puzzled Dr. Combe himself; for the impressions left by the past were so evidently fading away before the active operation of the present, that to say distinctly from the examining eye, or the examining finger, what manner of man he was, would have been exceedingly difficult. But the powers of the historian and biographer are less limited, and their record shall be given.

Mr. Patrick O'Donagough was but a half-breed, and that a mongrel half, of the noble species which his names announce. He was the natural son of an Englishman of wealth and consequence by a poor Irish girl called Nora O'Donagough; and though his father did what was considered by many as very *much for him*, he never permitted him to assume his name. *The young O'Donagough* was placed as a clerk to one of the *police magistrates* of the metropolis, and showed great ability

in the readiness with which he soon executed the business that passed through his hands. He not only learned to know by sight every rogue and roguess that appeared at the office, but showed a very uncommon degree of sagacity as to their innocence or guilt upon any new occasion that enforced their appearance there. His noble father never entirely lost sight of him; and finding his abilities so remarkable, he was induced again to use his interest in those quarters where influence abides, and to get him promoted to a lucrative situation in a custom-house on the coast, where he made money rapidly, while his handsome person and good address gave him access to the society of many people greatly his superiors in station, who most of them were frequenting a fashionable watering-place at no great distance from the station where he was employed.

This lasted for a few years, much to the satisfaction of his illustrious parent; and it might have continued till an easy fortune was assured to him, had he not unluckily formed too great an intimacy with one or two vastly gentlemanlike but decidedly sporting characters. From this point his star began to descend, till, step by step, he had lost his money, his appointment, his father's favour, and his own freedom. Having lain in prison for debt during some weeks, he found means again to touch the heart of his father so effectually as to induce him to pay his debts, and restore him to freedom; upon condition, however, of his immediately setting off for Australia with five hundred pounds in his pocket, and with the understanding that he was never more to return: the promise was given, and the five hundred pounds received; but the young man was not proof against temptation; he met some old acquaintance, lost half his money at *ecarté*, and permitted the vessel in which he was to sail to depart without him. This was a moment of low spirits and great discouragement; but he felt nevertheless that a steadfast heart and bold spirit might bring a man out of as bad a scrape even as that into which he had fallen.

Some people told him to apply again to his father, but he thought he had better not; and he applied to a gentleman with whom he had made acquaintance in prison instead. This person had, like himself, been reduced to great distress by the turf; but having fortunately found means of satisfying the creditor at whose suit he was detained, he was now doing exceedingly well as preacher to an independent congregation of ranting fanatics. He bestowed on his old associate some

excellent advice as to his future principles and conduct, giving him to understand that the turf, even to those who were the most fortunate, never answered so well as the line of business he now followed; and assured him, moreover, that if he would forthwith commence an assiduous study of the principles and practice of the profession, he would himself lend him a helping hand to turn it to account. O'Donagough loved change, novelty, and excitement, and again manifested great talent in the facility with which he mastered the mysteries of this new business. He was soon seen rapidly advancing towards lasting wealth and independence: one of the wealthiest merchants in London had offered him the place of domestic prayer and preacher at his beautiful residence at Castaway-Saved Park, when an almost forgotten creditor, who had lost sight of him for many years, unluckily recognised him as he was delivering a most awakening evening lecture in a large ware-room converted into a chapel near Moor Fields. Eager to take advantage of this unexpected piece of good fortune, the tailor (for such was his profession) arrested the inspired orator in the first place, and then asked him if he were able to settle his account in the next. Had the manner of transacting the business been reversed, it is probable that the affair would have been settled without any arrest at all; for Sir Miles Morice, of Castaway-Saved Park, was one of the most pious individuals of the age, and would hardly have permitted his chaplain elect (elect in every sense) to have gone to prison for thirty-seven pounds, nine shillings, and eight-pence; but being in prison, O'Donagough was shy of mentioning the circumstance to his distinguished patron, and was employed, at the time Mrs. Barnaby first made acquaintance with him, in composing discourses "on the preternatural powers over the human mind, accorded to the chosen vessels called upon to pour out the doctrine of the new birth to the people." There is little doubt that these really eloquent compositions would have sold rapidly, and perfectly have answered the object of their clever author. But accident prevented the trial from being made; for before the projected volume was more than half finished, success of another kind overtook Mr. O'Donagough.

* * * * *

Mrs. Barnaby, on entering, found the poor prisoner she had so charitably come to visit seated at a writing-desk, with many sheets of closely-written manuscript about it. He rose as she

entered, and approached her with a judicious mixture of respectful deference and ardent gratitude.

“ May Heaven reward you, madam, for this blessed proof of Christian feeling! . . . How can I suitably speak my gratitude ? ”

“ I do assure you, Mr. O'Donagough, that you are quite right in thinking that I come wholly and solely from a Christian spirit and a wish to do my duty,” said Mrs. Barnaby.

Mr. O'Donagough looked extremely handsome as he answered with a melancholy smile, “ Alas ! madam . . . what other motive could the whole world offer, excepting obedience to the will of Heaven, sufficiently strong to bring such a person as I now look upon voluntarily within these fearful walls ? ”

“ That is very true, indeed ! . . . There is nothing else that could make one do it. Heaven knows I suffered too much when I was here myself to feel any inclination for returning ; . . . but I thought, Mr. O'Donagough, that it would be very unfeeling in me, who witnessed your distress, to turn my back upon you when my own troubles are past and over ; and so I am come, Mr. O'Donagough, to ask if I can be of any use to you in any way before I set off upon my travels, . . . for I intend to make a tour to France, and perhaps to Rome.”

The widow looked at Mr. O'Donagough's eyes, to see how he took this news ; for, somehow or other, she could not help fancying that the poor young man would feel more forlorn and miserable still, when he heard that not only the walls of the Fleet Prison, but the English Channel was to divide them : nor did the expression of the eyes she thus examined lessen this idea. A settled, gentle melancholy, seemed to rise from his heart, and peep out upon her through these “ windows of the soul.”

“ To France ! . . . To Rome ! . . . ” A deep sigh followed, and for a minute or two the young man remained with his eyes mournfully fixed on her face. He then rose up, and stepping across the narrow space occupied by the table that stood between them, he took her hand, and in a deep, sweet voice, that almost seemed breaking into a sob, he said,—“ May you be happy whithersoever you go ! . . . My prayers shall follow you . . . My ardent prayers shall be unceasingly breathed to Heaven for your safety ; . . . and my blessing.

... my fervent, tender blessing, shall hover round you as you go!"

Mrs. Barnaby was exceedingly affected. "Don't speak so! . . . Pray don't speak so, Mr. O'Donagough!" she said, in a voice which gave her very good reason to believe that tears were coming. "I am sure I would pray for you too, when I am far away, if it would do you any good;" and here one of her worked pocket-handkerchiefs was really drawn out, and applied to her eyes.

"If, Mrs. Barnaby!" exclaimed the young man fervently, "If . . . ! oh! do not doubt it . . . do not for a moment doubt that I should feel the influence of it in every nerve. Let me teach you to understand me, Mrs. Barnaby, . . . for I have made an examination into the effects of spiritual sympathies the subject of much study. . . Lay your hand upon my heart . . . nay, let it rest there for a moment, and you will be able to comprehend what I would explain to you. Does not that poor heart beat and throb, Mrs. Barnaby? . . . and think you that it would have fluttered thus, had you not said that you would pray for me? . . . Then can you doubt that if indeed you should still remember the unhappy O'Donagough as you pursue your jocund course o'er hill and vale . . . if indeed you should breathe a prayer to Heaven for his welfare, can you doubt that it will fall upon him like the soft fanning of a seraph's wing, and heal the tumult of his soul, e'en in this dungeon?"

There was so much apparent sincerity, as well as tenderness, in what the young man uttered, that a feeling of conviction at once found its way to the understanding of Mrs. Barnaby; and little doubt, if any, remained on her mind as to the efficacy of her prayers . . . "Indeed, Mr. O'Donagough, I will pray for you then, . . . and I'm sure I should be a very wicked wretch if I did not . . . But is there nothing else I could do to comfort you?"

Mr. O'Donagough had often found his handsome and expressive countenance of great service to him, and so he did now. No answer he could have given in words to this kind question could have produced so great effect as the look with which he received it. Mrs. Barnaby was fluttered, agitated, and did not quite know what to do or say next; but Mr. O'Donagough did. He rose from his chair, and raising his arms above his head to their utmost length, he passionately

clasped his hands, and stood thus, — his fine eyes communing with the ceiling, — just long enough to give the widow time to be aware that he certainly was the very handsomest young man in the world ; . . . and then . . . he drew his chair close beside her, took her hand, and fixed those fine eyes very particularly upon hers.

“ Comfort me ! ” . . . he murmured in a soft whisper, which, had it not been breathed very close to her ear, would probably have been lost . . . “ Comfort me ! . . . you ask if you could comfort me ? . . . Oh ! earth, Oh ! heaven, bear witness as I swear, that to trace one single movement of pity on that lovely face would go farther towards healing every sorrow of my soul than all the wealth that Plutus could pour on me, though it should come in ingots of gold heavy enough to break the chains that hold me ! ”

“ Oh ! Mr. O’Donagough ! ” . . . was all Mrs. Barnaby could utter ; but she turned her face away, nor was the fascinating prisoner again indulged with a full view of it, though he endeavoured to make his eyes follow the way hers led, till he dropped down on his knees before her, and by taking possession of both her hands, enabled himself to pursue his interesting speculations upon its expression, in spite of all she could do to prevent it. This brought the business for which Mrs. Barnaby came, . . . namely, the inquiry into what she could do to be serviceable to Mr. O’Donagough, before she left London, . . . to a very speedy termination ; for with this fair index of what he MIGHT say before his eyes, the enterprising prisoner ventured to hint, that nothing would so effectually soothe his sorrows as the love of the charming being who had already expressed such melting pity for him. He moreover made it manifest that if she would, with the noble confidence which he was sure made a part of her admirable character, lend him wherewithal to liquidate the paltry debt for which he had been so treacherously arrested, he could find means again to interest his noble father in his behalf, and by giving him such a guarantee for his future steadiness as an honourable attachment was always sure to offer, he should easily induce him to renew his intention of fitting him out handsomely for an expedition to Australia, to which, as he confessed, he was more strongly inclined than even to persevere in listening to the call he had received to the ministry.

Notwithstanding the tender agitation into which such a

conversation must inevitably throw every lady who would listen to it, Mrs. Barnaby did not so completely lose her presence of mind, as not to remember that it would be better to look about her a little before she positively promised to marry and accompany to Australia the captivating young man who knelt at her feet. But this praiseworthy degree of caution did not prevent her from immediately deciding upon granting him the loan he desired; nay, with thoughtful kindness, she herself suggested that it might be more convenient to make the sum lent 40*l.* instead of 37*l.* 9*s.* 8*d.*; and having said this with a look and manner the most touching, she at length induced Mr. O'Donagough to rise; and after a few such expressions of tender gratitude as the occasion called for, they parted, the widow promising to deliver to him with her own fair hands on the morrow the sum necessary for his release; while he, as he fervently kissed her hand, declared, that deeply as he felt this generous kindness, he should wish it had never been extended to him, unless the freedom thus regained were rendered dear to his soul by her sharing it with him.

"Give me time, dear O'Donagough! . . . Give me time to think of this startling proposal, . . . and to-morrow we will meet again," were the words in which she replied to him; and then, permitting herself for one moment to return the tender glances he threw after her, she opened the room door and passed through it, too much engrossed by her own thoughts, hopes, wishes, and speculations, to heed the variety of amusing grimaces by which the various turnkeys hailed her regress through them.

It would be unreasonable for any one to "desire better sympathy" than that which existed between my heroine and Mr. O'Donagough when they thus tore themselves asunder; he remaining in durance vile till such time as fate or love should release him, and she to throw herself into a hackney coach, there to meditate on the pleasures and the pains either promised or threatened by the proposal she had just received.

The sympathy lay in this, . . . that both parties were determined to inform themselves very particularly of the worldly condition of the other, before they advanced one step farther towards matrimony, for which state though the gentleman had *spoken with rapture*, and the lady had listened with *softness*, both had too proper a respect to think of entering upon it *unadvisedly*.

CHAPTER X.

GIVES SOME ACCOUNT OF COLONEL HUBERT'S RETURN TO CHELTENHAM

WE must now follow Colonel Hubert to Cheltenham, to which place he returned in a state of mind not particularly easy to be described. The barrier he had placed before his heart, the heavy pressure of which he had sometimes felt to be intolerable, was now broken down; and it was a relief to him to remember that Agnes knew of his love. But, excepting this relief, there was little that could be felt as consolatory, and much that was decidedly painful in his state of mind. He knew but too well that not all the partial affection, esteem, and admiration entertained for him by his aunt, would prevent her feeling and expressing the most violent aversion to his marrying the niece of Mrs. Barnaby; he knew, too, what sort of reception the avowal of such an intention was likely to meet from his amiable but proud brother-in-law, and remembered, with feelings not very closely allied to satisfaction, the charge he had commissioned Lady Stephenson to give him, that he should keep watch over his thoughtless younger brother, in order to guard him, if possible, from bringing upon them the greatest misfortune that could befall a family such as theirs — namely, the introducing an inferior connection into it. . . . Neither could he forget the influence he had used, in consequence of this injunction, to crush the ardent, generous, uncalculating attachment of his confiding friend Frederick for her whom, in defiance of the wishes of his whole family, he was now fully determined to make his wife. All this gave materials for very painful meditation; and when, in addition to it, he recalled those fearful words of Agnes, "I will never be your wife!" it required all the power of that master passion which had seized upon his heart to keep him steady to his resolution of communicating his wishes and intentions to Lady Elizabeth, and to sustain his hopes of engaging her actively to assist him in obtaining what he felt very sure she would earnestly desire that he should never possess.

With all these heavy thoughts working within him, he entered the drawing-room of his aunt, and rejoiced to find her

tête-à-tête with his sister, Sir Edward being absent at a dinner-party of gentlemen. They both welcomed him with eager inquiries concerning their young favourite, the tone of which at once determined him to enter immediately upon the tremendous subject of his hopes and wishes; and the affectionate interest expressed for her, warmed him into a degree of confidence which he was far from feeling when he entered the room.

"Pretty creature!" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth; "and that wretched woman has actually left her alone in London lodgings? . . . Why did you not make her return with you, Montague? . . . It was surely no time to stand upon etiquette."

"I dared not even ask it," replied Colonel Hubert, his voice faltering, and his manner such as to make the two ladies exchange a hasty glance with each other.

"You dared not ask Agnes Willoughby, poor little thing, to come down with you to my house, Colonel Hubert?" said the old lady. "You surely forget that you went up to London with an invitation for her in your pocket?"

"My dear aunt," replied Colonel Hubert, hesitating in his speech, as neither of his auditors had ever before heard him hesitate, "I have much to tell you respecting both Agnes Willoughby . . . and myself . . ."

Then tell it, in Heaven's name!" said Lady Elizabeth sharply. "Let it be what it may, I would rather hear it than be kept hanging thus by the ears between the possible and impossible."

Colonel Hubert moved his chair; and seating himself beside Lady Stephenson, took her hand, as if to show that she too was to listen to what he was about to say, though it was their aunt to whom he addressed himself. "From suspense, at least, I can relieve you, Lady Elizabeth, and you, too, my dear Emily, who look at me so anxiously without saying a word . . . at least I can relieve you from suspense. . . I love Miss Willoughby; and I hope, with as little delay as possible, to make her my wife."

Lady Stephenson pressed his hand, and said nothing; but a deep sigh escaped her. Lady Elizabeth, who was not accustomed to manifest her feelings so gently, rose from her seat on the sofa, and placing herself immediately before him, said, with great vehemence, "Montague Hubert, son of my dead

sister, you are come to years of discretion, and a trifle beyond Your magnificent estate of thirteen hundred a year, and I beg your pardon some odd pounds, shillings, and pence over, is all your own, and you may marry Mrs. Barnaby herself, if you please, and settle it upon her. No one living that I know of has any power to prevent it. . . . But, sir, if you expect that Lady Elizabeth Norris will ever receive as her niece a girl artful enough to conceal from me and from your sister the fact that she was engaged to you, and that, too, while receiving from both of us the most flattering attention nay, such affection as might have opened any heart not made of brass and steel if you expect this, you will find yourself altogether mistaken."

This harangue, which her ladyship intended to be overpoweringly severe, was, in fact, very nearly the most agreeable one that Colonel Hubert could have listened to, for it touched only on a subject of offence that he was perfectly able to remove. All embarrassment immediately disappeared from his manner; and springing up to place himself between his aunt and the door, to which she was approaching with stately steps, he said, in a voice almost of exultation, "My dearest aunt! How like your noble self it is to have made this objection before every other! And this objection, which would indeed have been fatal to every hope of happiness, I can remove by a single word Agnes was as ignorant of my love for her as you and Emily could be till last night. . . . I have loved her longer, it may be, than I have known it myself perhaps I might date it from the first hour I saw her, but she knew nothing of it. . . . Last night, for the first time, I confessed to her my love. . . . And what think you, Lady Elizabeth, was her answer?"

"Nay, Mr. Benedict, I know not. . . . 'I thank you, sir,' and a low courtesy, I suppose."

"I was less happy, Lady Elizabeth," he replied, half smiling; adding a moment after, however, with a countenance from which all trace of gaiety had passed away, "The answer of Miss Willoughby to my offer of marriage was Colonel Hubert, I can never be your wife."

"Indeed! Then how comes it, Montague, that you still talk of making her so?"

"Because, before I left her, I thought I saw some ground

for hope that her refusal was not caused by any personal dislike to me."

"Really!" . . . interrupted Lady Elizabeth.

"Nay, my dear aunt," resumed Hubert, "you may in your kind and long-enduring partiality fancy this impossible; but, unhappily for my peace at that moment, I remembered that I was more than five-and-thirty, and she not quite eighteen."

"But she told you I suppose that you were still a very handsome fellow. . . . Only she had some other objection,—and pray, what was it, sir?"

"She feared the connection would be displeasing to you and Lady Stephenson."

"And you assured her most earnestly, perhaps, that she was mistaken?"

"No, Lady Elizabeth, I did not. There are circumstances in her position that must make any marrying her appear objectionable to my family; and though my little independence is, as your ladyship observes, my own, I would not wish to share it with any woman who would be indifferent to their reception of her. All my hope, therefore, rests in the confidence I feel that, when the first unpleasant surprise of this avowal shall have passed away, you . . . both of you . . . for there is no one else whose approbation I should wait for . . . you will suffer your hearts and heads to strike a fair and reasonable balance between all that my sweet Agnes has in her favour and all she has against her. Do this, Lady Elizabeth, but do it as kindly as you can. . . . Emily will help you . . . to-morrow morning you shall tell me your decision . . . I can resolve on nothing till I hear it."

Colonel Hubert, as soon as he had said this, left the room, nor did they see him again that night.

The morning came, and he met Lady Stephenson at the breakfast table, but Lady Elizabeth did not appear, sending down word, as was not unusual with her, that she should take her chocolate in her own room. Sir Edward was not in the room when he entered, and he seized the opportunity to utter a hasty and abrupt inquiry as to the answer he might expect from herself and their aunt.

"From me, Montague," she replied, "you cannot fear to hear any thing very harshly disagreeable. In truth, I have been so long accustomed to believe that whatever my father did, or wished to do, was wisest — best, that it would be very

difficult for me to think otherwise now; besides, I cannot deny, though perhaps it hardly ought to be taken into the account, that I see am very much in love with Agnes Willoughby, and that . . . though I would give my little finger she had no aunt Barnaby belonging to her . . . I never saw any woman in any rank whom I could so cordially love and welcome as a sister."

"In reply to this, Colonel Hubert clasped the lovely speaker to his heart; and before he had released her from his embrace, or repeated his inquiry concerning Lady Elizabeth, Sir Edward Stephenson entered, and the conversation became general.

For many hours of that inky morning Colonel Hubert was kept in the most tantalizing state of suspense by the prolonged absence of the old lady from the drawing-room. But at length, after Sir Edward and his lady had set off for their second morning walk without him, he was cheered by the appearance of the ancient maiden, who was his aunt's tire-woman, bringing in her lap-dog, and the velvet cushion that was its appendage; which having placed reverently before the fire, she moved the favourite *foutouil* an inch one way, and the little table that ever stood beside it an inch the other, and was retiring, when Colonel Hubert said, . . . "Is my aunt coming immediately, Mitchell?"

"My lady will not be long, colonel. . . . But her ladyship is very poorly this morning," and with a graceful swinging courtesy, she withdrew.

The colonel trembled all over, "very poorly," as applied to Lady Elizabeth Norris, having from his earliest recollection always been considered as synonymous to "very cross."

"She will refuse to see her!" thought he, pacing the room in violent agitation . . . "and in that case she will keep her word . . . She will never be my wife!"

"Bless me! . . . How you do shake the room, Colonel Hubert," said a very cracked voice behind him, just after he had passed the door in his perturbed promenade. "If you took such a fancy early in the morning, when the house maid might sweep up the dust you had raised, I should not object to it, for it is very like having one's carpet beat; . . . but just as I am coming to sit down here, it is very disagreeable indeed."

This grumble lasted just long enough to allow the old lady *

(who looked as if she had been eating crab-apples, and walked as if she had suddenly been seized with the gout in all her joints,) to place herself in her easy chair as she concluded it, during which time the colonel stood still upon the hearth-rug with his eyes anxiously fixed upon the venerable but very hostile features that were approaching him. A moment's silence followed, during which the old lady looked up in his face with the most provoking expression imaginable; for cross as it was, there was a glance of playful malice in it that seemed to say,—

“You look as if you were going to cry, colonel.”

He felt provoked with her, and this gave him courage. — “May I beg of you, Lady Elizabeth, to tell me what I may hope from your kindness on the subject I mentioned to you last night?” said he.

“Pray, sir, do you remember your grandfather?” was her reply.

“The Earl of Archdale? Yes, madam, perfectly.”

“You do Humph! And your paternal grandfather, with his pedigree from Duke Nigel of Normandy; did you ever hear of him?”

“Yes, Lady Elizabeth,” replied the colonel in a tone of indifference; “I have heard of him; but he died, you know, when I was very young.”

There was a minute's silence, which was broken by another question from Lady Elizabeth.

“And pray, sir, will you do me the favour to tell me who was the grandfather of Miss Willoughby?”

“I have little, or indeed no doubt, Lady Elizabeth, that Miss Willoughby is the grand-daughter of that Mr. Willoughby, of Greatfield Park, in Warwickshire, who lost the tremendous stake at piquet that you have heard of, and two of whose daughters married the twin-sons of Lord Eastcombe I think you cannot have forgotten the circumstances.”

Lady Elizabeth drew herself forward in her chair, and fixing her eyes steadfastly on the face of her nephew, said, in a voice of great severity, “Do you mean to assert to me, Colonel Montague Hubert, that Agnes Willoughby is niece to Lady Eastcombe and the Honourable Mrs. Nivett?”

“I mean to assert to you, madam, that it is my firm persuasion that such will prove to be the fact. But I have not considered it necessary, Lady Elizabeth Norris, for the sake of

my father to withhold his affections from the chosen of his heart, till he was assured he should gain all the honour by the selection which a union with Lady Eastcombe's niece could bestow; . . . nor should I have mentioned my belief in this connection, by way of a set-off to the equally near claim of Mrs. Barnaby, had you not questioned me so particularly."

Had Colonel Hubert studied his answer for a twelvemonth, he could not have composed a more judicious one: there was a spice of hauteur in it by no means uncongenial to the old lady's feelings; and there was, too, enough of defiance to make her take counsel with herself as to whether it would be wise to vex him further. It was, therefore, less with the accent of mockery, and more with that of curiosity, that she recommenced her interrogatory.

"Will you tell me, Montague, from what source you derived this knowledge of Miss Willoughby's family? . . . Was it from herself?"

"Certainly not. If the facts be as I have stated, and as I hope and believe they will be found, Miss Willoughby will be as much surprised by the discovery as your ladyship."

"From whom, then, did you hear it?"

"From no one, Lady Elizabeth, as a matter of fact connected with Agnes. But something, I know not what, introduced the mention of old Willoughby's wild stake at piquet at the club the other day . . . The name struck me, and I led old Major Barnes to talk to me of the family. He told me that a younger son, a gay harum-scarum sort of youth, married some girl, when he was in country quarters, whom his family would not receive; that, ruined and broken-hearted by this desertion, he went abroad almost immediately after his marriage, and has never been heard of since."

"And this is the foundation upon which you build your hope, that Mrs. Barnaby's niece is also the niece of Lady Eastcombe? . . . Ingenious, certainly, colonel, as a theory, but somewhat slight as an edifice on which to hang any weighty matter. . . . Don't you think so?"

"I hang nothing on it, Lady Elizabeth. If I did not feel that Miss Willoughby was calculated to make me happy without this supposed relationship, I certainly should not think *her so with it*. However, that your ladyship may not fancy *my imagination more fertile than it really is*, I must add, *tho' when at Clifton, I did hear from the Misses Peters, who*

have before mentioned to you, that the father of Agnes went abroad after his marriage, and moreover that no news of him in any way ever reached his wife's family afterwards."

Lady Elizabeth for some time made no reply, but seemed to ponder upon this statement very earnestly. At length she said, in a tone from which irony and harshness, levity and severity, were equally banished, — "Montague! . . . there are some of the feelings which you have just expressed, in which I cannot sympathise; but a very little reflection will teach you that there is no ground of offence to you in this . . . for it would be unnatural that I should do so. You tell me that your father's son need not deem the honour of a relationship to Viscountess Eastcombe necessary to his happiness in life. So far I am able to comprehend you, although Lady Eastcombe is an honourable and excellent personage, whose near connection with a young lady would be no contemptible advantage (at least in my mind) upon her introduction into life. But we will pass this. . . . When, however, you proceed to tell me that your choice in marriage could in nowise be affected by the rank and station of those with whom it might bring you in contact, and that too, when the question is, whether a Mrs. Barnaby, or a Lady Eastcombe, should be in the foreground of the group, you must excuse me if I cannot follow you."

Nothing is so distressing in an argument as to have a burst of grandiloquent sentiment set aside by a few words of common sense. Colonel Hubert walked the length of the drawing-room, and back again, before he answered; he felt that, as his aunt put the case, he was as far from following his assertion by his judgment as herself; but ere his walk was finished, the image of the desolate Agnes, as he had seen her the night before, arose before him, and resumed its unconquerable influence on his heart. He took a hint from her ladyship, threw aside all mixture of heat and anger, and replied, —

"Heaven forbid, Lady Elizabeth, that I should attempt to defend any such doctrine: . . . believe me, it is not mine. But, in one word, I love Miss Willoughby; and if I can arrive at the happiness of believing that I am loved in return, nothing but her own refusal will prevent me from marrying her. This is my statement of facts; I will attempt no other,

and throw myself wholly upon your judgment to smooth, or render more rugged, the path which lies before me."

The old lady looked at him and smiled very kindly. "Montague," said she, "resolve my doubts. Is it the mention of your pleasant suspicions respecting Miss Willoughby's paternal ancestry, . . . or your present unvarnished frankness, that has won upon me? . . . Upon my honour I could not answer this question myself; . . . but certain it is that I do feel more inclined to remember what a very sweet creature Agnes is at this moment, than I ever thought I should again when our conversation began."

Colonel Hubert knelt down upon her footstool, and kissing her hand, said, in a voice that spoke his happiness, "It matters not to me what the cause is, my dearest aunt. . . I thank Heaven for the effect! . . . and now . . . do not think that I am taking an unfair advantage of this kindness, if I ask you to remember the position of Miss Willoughby at this moment. With such views for the future as I have explained to you, is it not my duty to remove her from it?"

"What then do you propose to do?" demanded Lady Elizabeth.

"I can do nothing," . . . he replied; . . . "whatever aid or protection can be extended to her must come from you . . . or Lady Stephenson; . . . and that I should rather it came from you, who have long been to me as a mother, can hardly surprise you. Sir Edward is an excellent young man, . . . but he has prejudices that I should not like to battle with on this occasion. It is from you, and you only, Lady Elizabeth, that I either hope or wish to find protection for my future wife."

Again Lady Elizabeth pondered. "Did not Agnes tell us," she said at length, "did she not say in her letter to Lady Stephenson, that she had applied to some aged relation in Devonshire, by whom she hoped to be extricated from her present terrible embarrassment?"

"It is very likely," replied Colonel Hubert, "for she spoke to me of such a one, and hoped that Thursday . . . that is to-morrow, is it not? . . . would bring an answer to her application."

"Then, Montague, we must wait to hear what this Thursday brings forth before we interfere to repeat the offer of protection which it is possible she may not want. . . . And

Heaven grant it may be so, . . . for if she is to be your wife, Colonel Hubert, and it is pretty plain she will be, will it not be better that you should follow her with your addresses to the lowliest roof in Devonshire, than that she should take refuge here where every gossip's finger will be pointed at her?"

It was impossible to deny the truth of this, and Colonel Hubert cared not to avow that all the favour she had bid him hope for was but conditional, and that till the avowal of his love should be sanctioned by his aunt and sister, he was still to hold himself as a rejected man. He dared not tell her this, lest the feelings he had conquered with so much difficulty should return, upon learning that it was not yet too late to encourage them.

As patiently as he could, therefore, he awaited the expected letter from Agnes, and well was he rewarded for doing so. The letter itself, modest and unboastful as it was, gave a sufficiently improved picture of her condition to remove all present anxiety on her account; and though he certainly had no idea of the transformation she had undergone, from a heart-broken, penniless dependent, into a petted, cherished heiress, he was soothed into the belief that it would now cost his aunt and sister infinitely less pain than he had anticipated, to extend such a degree of favour to his Agnes as might lead her to confirm the hope on which he lived.

But it was not the letter of Agnes that produced the most favourable impression upon Lady Elizabeth; the postscript of Miss Compton was infinitely more powerful in its effect upon her mind. Of Agnes, personally, she never thought without a degree of partial admiration that nearly approached to affection; and vague as the hope was respecting the family of her father, it clung very pertinaciously to the old lady's memory, while a certain resemblance which she felt sure that she could trace between the nose of Agnes and that of the honourable Miss Nivett, Lord Eastcombe's eldest daughter, was doing wonders in her mind by way of a balance-weight against the rouge and ringlets of Mrs. Barnaby; yet, nevertheless, the notion that not "horrid Mrs. Barnaby" only, but a host of aunts and cousins of the same breed, might come down upon her in the event of this ill-assorted marriage, kept her in a *sort of feverish wavering state, something between good and ill humour, that was exceedingly annoying to her nephew.*

The keen-sighted old lady at once perceived that the post-

script to Agnes's letter was not written by a second Mrs. Barnaby, and from that moment she determined, much more decisively than she chose to express, that she would torment Colonel Hubert with no farther opposition.

After a short consultation between the aunt and niece, that letter was despatched, the receipt of which was mentioned before Miss Compton and Agnes left London for Clifton. Had Colonel Hubert been consulted upon it, he would perhaps have suggested, as an improvement, that the proposed meeting should take place the following week in London; but, on the whole, the composition was too satisfactory for him to venture upon any alteration of it, and again he called patience to his aid, while many miserably long days were wasted by the very slow and deliberate style in which the man and maid servant who managed all Lady Elizabeth's worldly concerns set about preparing themselves and her for this removal. It was with a degree of pleasure which almost atoned for the vexation of this delay, that he learned Sir Edward's good-natured compliance with his beautiful bride's capricious-seeming wish of revisiting Clifton. Colonel Hubert pertinaciously refused to let his gay brother-in-law into his confidence, till the time arrived for presenting him to Miss Willoughby, as to his future wife. Did this reserve arise from some unacknowledged doubt whether Agnes, when the pressure of misfortune was withdrawn, would voluntarily bestow herself on a man of his advanced age? Perhaps so. That Agnes was less than eighteen, and himself more than thirty-five, were facts repeated to himself too often for his tranquillity.

CHAPTER XI.

AGNES APPEARS AT CLIFTON IN A NEW CHARACTER.

AT as early an hour, on the morning after her arrival at Clifton, as Agnes could hope to find her friend Mary awake, she set off for Rodney Place. It was a short walk, but a happy one, even though she had yet to learn whether Lady Elizabeth Norris and her party were or were not arrived.

But there was something at the bottom of her heart that made her very tolerably easy . . . more so perhaps than she

confessed to herself . . . on this point. Every day made the mysterious fact of Miss Compton's being a woman of handsome fortune more familiar to her, and every hour made it more clear that she had no other object in life than to make that fortune contribute to the happiness of her niece. It followed, therefore, that, not having altogether forgotten the fact of Colonel Hubert's declaration at a moment when all things, but his own heart, must have pleaded against her, some very comfortable ground for hope to rest upon was discoverable in the circumstances of her present position. . . . "There will be no danger," thought she, "that when he speaks again, my answer should be such as to make him fancy himself too old for me."

The servant at Rodney Place who opened the door to Agnes, was the same who had done her the like service some dozen of times during her last visit at Clifton, but he betrayed no sign of recognition when she presented herself. In fact, the general appearance of Agnes was so greatly changed from what he had been accustomed to see it when she was clothed in the residuum of the Widow Barnaby's weeds, that till she smiled, and spoke her inquiry for Miss Peters, he had no recollection of her.

As soon, however, as he discovered that it was the Miss Willoughby who had left all his ladies crying when she went away, he took care to make her perceive that she was not forgotten by the manner in which he said, "Miss Peters, ma'am, is not come down stairs yet; but she will be very happy to see you, ma'am, if you will please to walk up."

As the early visiter was of the same opinion, she scrupled not to find her way to the well-known door, and without even the ceremony of a tap, presented herself to her friend. It is probable that Mary looked more at the face and less at the dress of the visiter than the servant had done, for, uttering a cry of joy, she sprang towards her, and most affectionately folded her in a cordial embrace.

"My sweet Agnes! . . . This is so like you! At the very instant you entered, I was calculating the probabilities between to-day and to-morrow for your arrival. Ah, little girl! . . . Did I not tell you to address yourself to Miss Compton, of Compton Bassett, long ago? What say you to my wishing now?"

"That you were inspired, Mary, and that I deserved to

suffer a good deal for not listening to such an oracle. . . . But had I done so, I should have never known. . . ."

"The difference between the extreme of Barnaby misery and Compton comfort?" said Mary, finishing the sentence for her.

Agnes blushed, but said with a happy smile, "Yes. . . . assuredly I may say so."

Miss Peters looked at her, and laughed. "There is something else you would not have known, I am very sure, Agnes, by that conscious face, . . . and it must be something very well worth knowing by that look of radiant happiness which I never saw on your fair face before. . . . no, not even when for the first time you looked down upon Avon's dun stream; for then, if I remember rightly, your joy showed itself in tears; but now, my dear, you are dimpling with smiles, though I really believe you are doing all you can to hide them from me. Say why is this? . . . wherefore . . . what should it mean?"

"Mary! . . . There is not an event of my life, nor a thought of my heart, that I would wish to hide from you. . . . But how can I begin telling you such very long and incredible stories as I have got to tell, just as you have finished dressing, and are ready to go down to breakfast?" said Agnes.

"Breakfast!" replied her friend. . . . "I would rather go without breakfast for a month than not hear the beginning, middle, and end of all your adventures from the moment you left this house in crape and bombasin, with your cheeks as white as marble, and your eyes full of tears, up to this present now, that you have entered it again in as elegant a morning toilet as London can furnish, with your cheeks full of dimples, and your eyes dancing in your head with happiness, notwithstanding all your efforts to look demure. . . . Come, sit down again, Agnes, and tell me all."

"Tell you all I will, depend upon it, but not now, dear Mary. . . . Think of all your mother's kindness to me. . . . Shall I sit here indulging in confidential gossip with you, instead of paying my compliments to her and the rest of the family in the breakfast-room? . . . No, positively no. So come down stairs with me directly, or I will go by myself."

"Aunt Compton is spoiling you, child; that is quite clear. . . . You used to be obedient to command, and ever ready to do as I desired, but now you lay down the law like a

lord chancellor. Come along, then, Miss Agnes; but remember that, as soon as breakfast is over, I expect, first to be taken to the Mall (have I not got nice lodgings for you?) and introduced to Miss Compton, of Compton Bassett, and then taken to our old seat on the rock, then and there to hear all that has befallen you."

To this Agnes agreed, and they descended together. The interest and the pleasure that her entrance excited among the family group already assembled round the breakfast-table was very gratifying to her. Mrs. Peters seemed hardly less delighted than Mary; the two girls kissed her affectionately, and gazed at her with as much admiration as astonishment, which is tantamount to saying that they admired her much; good Mr. Peters welcomed her very cordially, and inquired with the most scrupulous politeness for the health of Mrs. Barnaby; and James told her very frankly that he was delighted to see her, and that she was fifty times handsomer than ever.

The conversation that followed was perfectly frank, on the part of Agnes, in all that related to the kindness of her aunt Compton, and the happiness she enjoyed from being under her care; but, from delicacy to them, she said as little as possible about Mrs. Barnaby; and from delicacy to herself, made no mention whatever either of Colonel Hubert or his family.

As soon as the breakfast was over Mrs. Peters declared her intention of immediately waiting on Miss Compton; an attention to her aunt which Agnes welcomed with pleasure, though it still farther postponed the much-wished for conversation with her friend Mary. The whole family declared their eagerness to be introduced to the old lady, of whom Miss Willoughby spoke with such enthusiasm; but as the discreet Mrs. Peters declared that at this first visit her eldest daughter only must accompany her; the rest yielded of necessity, and the three ladies set out together.

"I expect to find this new aunt a much more agreeable personage, my dear Agnes, than your former chaperon, though she was my dear sister But on one point I flatter myself I shall find them alike."

"I hope this point of resemblance is not of much importance to your happiness, my dear Mrs. Peters," replied Agnes, "for if it be, you are in a bad way; since night and day are infinitely less unlike than my two aunts in all things."

“ Yes, but it is of great importance to my happiness, particularly for this evening, Agnes,” replied Mrs. Peters. “ The point of resemblance I want to find is in the trusting you to my care. We are going to a party this evening where I should particularly like to take you, . . . and it will be impossible, you know, to arrange exchange of visits, and manage that an invitation shall be sent and accepted by aunt Compton on such very short notice. Do you think she will let you go with us ? ”

“ Ask her, my dear Mrs. Peters,” replied Agnes with a very happy smile, “ and see what she will say to it.”

“ I will, if I do not find her too awful,” was the answer.

The manner in which Miss Compton received and entertained her visitors, was a fresh source of surprise to Agnes. Though thinking very highly of her intellect, and even of her conversational powers, she had anticipated some symptoms of reserve and shyness on the introduction of so perfect a recluse to strangers. But nothing of the kind appeared. Miss Compton was pleased by the appearance and manner of both mother and daughter, and permitted them to perceive that she was so, rather with the easy flattering sort of courtesy with which a superior treats those whom he wishes should be pleased with him, than with any appearance of the *mauvaise honte* which might have been expected. Nor must this be condemned as unnatural, for it was, in fact, the inevitable result of the state of mind in which she had lived. With keen intellect, elastic animal spirits, and a position that places the owner of it fairly above the reach of annoyance from any one, (an elevation, by the bye, that few of the great ones of the earth can boast,) it is not an introduction to any ordinary society that can discompose the mind, or agitate the manners.

Mrs. Peters did not find aunt Compton too awful, and therefore preferred her request, which, like every other that could have been made likely to promote the pleasure of Agnes, was not only graciously but gratefully complied with. A question being started as to the order in which the party should go, Mrs. Peters's carriage not being able to take them all at once, Miss Compton settled it by saying, — “ Agnes has her own carriage and servants here, but she must not go alone ; and perhaps, if she calls at your house, Mrs. Peters, you will

have the kindness to let her friend Mary accompany her, and permit her carriage to follow yours."

This being settled, Mrs. Peters and her daughter rose to take leave; and Mary then hoped that Agnes, by returning with them, would at length give her the opportunity she so earnestly desired of hearing all she had to tell. But she was again disappointed, for when the young heiress asked her indulgent aunt whether she would not take advantage of the lovely morning to see some of the beauties of Clifton, she replied, — "I should like nothing so well, Agnes, as to take a drive with you over the beautiful downs you talk of. Will you spare her to me for so long, Miss Peters?"

"I think you deserve a little of her, Miss Compton," answered the young lady; "and with the hope of the evening before me, I will enter no protest against the morning drive."

The mother and daughter then took leave, and as they left the house, they exchanged a glance that seemed to express mutual congratulation on the altered condition of their favourite.

"Well, mamma, you will be rewarded this time for obeying my commands like a dutiful mother, and permitting me to make a pet of this sweet Agnes. . . . There is nothing in the Barnaby style here. . . . I was sure Miss Compton, of Compton Bassett, must be good for something," said Mary.

"If I may venture to hope, as I think I may," replied her mother, "that she will never be the means of bringing me in contact with my incomparable sister-in-law again, I may really thank you, saucy girl as you are, for having so taken the reins into your own hands. I delight in this Miss Compton. There is a racy originality about her that is very awakening. And as for your Agnes, what with her new young happiness, her graceful loveliness, now first seen to some advantage, her proud and pretty fondness for her aunt, and her natural joy at seeing us all again under circumstances so delightfully altered, I really do think she is the most enchanting creature I ever beheld."

CHAPTER XII,

A PARTY.—A MEETING.—GOOD SOMETIMES PRODUCTIVE OF EVIL.

THE superintending the toilet of Agnes for the party of that evening was a new and very delightful page in the history of the spinster of Compton Basett. The fondest mother dressing a fair daughter for her first presentation, never watched the operations of the toilet more anxiously; and in her case there was a sort of personal triumph attending its success, that combined the joy of the accomplished artist, who sees the finished loveliness himself has made, with the fond approval of affection.

Partly from her own native good taste, and partly from the wisdom of listening with a very discriminating judgment to the practical counsels of an experienced *modiste*, the dress of Agnes was exactly what it ought to have been; and the proud old lady herself could not have desired an appearance more *distinguée* than that of her adopted child, when, turning from Peggy and her mirror, she made her a sportive courtesy and exclaimed,—

“Have you not made a fine lady of me, aunt Betsy?”

When Miss Compton's carriage stopped at Rodney Place, it was Mrs. Peters, instead of her daughter, who took a place in it.

“Mary is excessively angry with me,” said she, as they drove off, “for not letting her be your companion; but I think it more *comme il faut*, Agnes, that I should present you to Mrs. Pemberton myself. She is a vastly fine lady; . . . not one of us humble Bristolian Cliftonites, who pique ourselves rather upon the elevation of our lime-stone rock above the level of the stream that laves our merchants' quays, than on any other species of superiority that we can lay claim to. Mrs. Pemberton is none of us. . . . She has a house in London and a park in Buckinghamshire, and flies over the Continent every now and then with first-rate aristocratical velocity; but she has one feeling sometimes shared by more ordinary mortals, which is a prodigious love of music. This, and a sort of *besoin*, to which she pleads guilty, of holding a salon every evening that she is not from home, forces upon her, as I take it, the necessity of visiting many of us who might elsewhere scarcely be deemed worthy to approach her foot-stool. We

met her at the Parslowes, where the girls' performances elicited a very gracious degree of approbation. An introduction followed; she has honoured me by attending a concert at my own house, and this is the fourth evening we have passed with her. Now you have the *carte du pays*, and I think you will agree with me, that it is much better I should make my *entrée* with you on my arm, than permit you to follow with the damsels in my train."

Agnes confessed that she thought the arrangement much more conducive to the dignity of her approach, and thanked her companion for her thoughtful attention.

"Perhaps it is not quite disinterested, Agnes. . . . I am rather proud of having such an exotic to produce. . . . What a delightful aunt Compton it is! Carriage perfect. . . . scrvants evidently town-made white satin and blonde fit for an incipient duchess! If your little head be not turned, Agnes, you will deserve to be chronicled as a miracle."

"I have had enough to steady the giddiest craft that ever was launched, my dear Mrs. Peters," replied Agnes; "and it would be silly, indeed, to throw my ballast overboard, because I am sailing before the wind."

"Then your head is not turned; that is what you mean to say, is it not?"

"No," replied Agnes, laughing, "my head is not turned, — I feel almost sure of it. . . . But why do you make such particular inquiries respecting the state of my head at present, Mrs. Peters? Shall I be called upon to give some illustrious proof of its healthy condition to-night?"

"Yes, my dear. . . . You will assuredly be called upon to sing, and you must prove to my satisfaction that you are not grown too fine to oblige your friends."

"Is that all? Depend upon it I will do whatever you wish me."

Mrs. Pemberton's drawing-room was full of company when they entered it, but that lady espied them the moment they arrived, and stepped forward with so much eagerness to receive them, that Agnes thought Mrs. Peters had, in her account of the acquaintance between them, hardly done justice to the degree of favour she had risen to. But a few minutes more convinced her, that even she, unknown as she was, might flatter herself that some portion of this distinguished reception was intended for her; for Mrs. Pemberton took her hand and

led her to a seat at the upper end of the room with an air of such marked distinction, as, spite of the philosophy of which she had just been boasting, brought a very bright flush to her cheeks, if it did not turn her head. A few words, however, spoken by that lady to one of those beside whom she placed her, explained the mystery, and proved that Mrs. Peters had deemed it prudent to intimate her intention of bringing a young friend with her beforehand.

“ Miss Eversham, you must permit me to introduce this young lady to you — Miss Willoughby . . . Miss Eversham . . . From a little word in Mrs. Peters’s note this morning, I flatter myself that I shall have the gratification of hearing you sing together. This lady’s voice is a *contralto*, Miss Willoughby, and from what I have heard of your performance at Mrs. Peters’s, before I had the pleasure of being acquainted with her, your voices will be delightful together.”

This most unexpected address was not calculated to restore the composure of Agnes, and it was not without some effort that she summoned courage enough to answer the numerous questions of Miss Eversham, (an elderly young lady too much inured to exhibition to have any mercy upon her,) when, as an excuse for withdrawing her attention for a moment from the ceaseless catechism that tormented her, she turned away her eyes to look upon the company, and beheld the profile of Colonel Hubert, as he bent to speak to a lady seated on a sofa near which he stood. This was not an occurrence very likely to restore her composure, but at least it spared her any farther anxiety respecting the effort necessary for receiving the attentions of her neighbour properly, for she altogether forgot her vicinity, and became as completely incapable of hearing her farther questions, as of answering them.

“ Had he seen her? . . . Did he know she was at Clifton? . . . Was his aunt, — was Lady Stephenson there? . . . How would he address her? . . . Would their intercourse begin from the point at which it had broken off, or would her altered circumstances, by placing each in a new position, lead to a renewed proposal, and an answer? . . . Oh how different from her former one!”

These were the questions that now addressed themselves to her, making her utterly incapable of hearing the continued string of musical interrogatories which went on beside her.

The short interval during which Colonel Hubert retained his attitude and continued his conversation, seemed an age, and expectation was growing sick, and almost merging in despair, when at last the lady turned to answer a question from her neighbour, and Colonel Hubert stood upright and cast his eyes upon the company.

Her emotion was too powerful to permit bashfulness to take any part in it; she sought his eye, and met it. In a moment all suffering was over, and all anxiety a thousandfold overpaid, for the look she encountered was all her heart could wish. At the first glance, indeed, he evidently did not know her; it was that of a wandering speculative eye, that seemed looking out for occupation; and had she quite understood it aright, she might have perceived that it was arrested by a sort of sudden suspicion that it had found something worth pausing upon. But this lasted not above the tenth part of an instant, and then he darted forward; his fine proud countenance expressive of uncontrollable agitation, and the rapidity with which he approached her was such as to show pretty plainly that he forgot it was a crowded drawing-room he was traversing.

By the time he reached her, however, short as the interval was, the glow that had lighted up her face when it first arrested his eye had faded into extreme paleness, and when he spoke to her, she trembled so violently as to be quite unable to articulate. Colonel Hubert perceived her agitation, and felt that it approached in some degree to his own. Had he been twenty-five, this would have probably been all he wished to see; as it was, he felt a dreadful spasm at the heart, as the hateful thought occurred that after what had passed there might be two ways in which it might be interpreted. But it was a passing pang; and longing to present her to his aunt and sister, and at the same time release her from the embarrassing curiosity so conspicuous in the manner of her neighbour, he held the hand she extended to him while he said —

“Let me lead you to Lady Elisabeth, Miss Willoughby; both she and Lady Stephenson are in the next room, and will be delighted to see you.”

Agnes rose, and though really hardly able to stand, replied, with all the voice she had, that she should be greatly obliged if he would lead her to them, taking his offered arm as she spoke. At this moment Sir Edward Stephenson crossed the room with his eyes fixed upon her, and with evident curiosity,

to find out who it was his stately brother-in-law was escorting so obsequiously. The extreme beauty of Agnes, and the remarkable elegance of her dress and appearance, had, in truth, already drawn all eyes upon her, and the whispered inquiries of many had been answered by Mrs. Pemberton, with the information that she was an heiress, and the first amateur singer in England. The foundation of these assertions had reached her by the note of the judicious Mrs. Peters, who, while asking permission to bring a young friend, took the opportunity of hinting the two interesting facts above mentioned, and the effect of their repetition among her guests doubtless added not a little to the interest with which Agnes was looked at.

Sir Edward Stephenson was among those who had heard of the heiress-ship and the voice, but the name had not reached him; and while looking at the elegant girl in white satin, who lent upon Colonel Hubert's arm, not the slightest resemblance between her and the fair girl in deep mourning that he had once or twice seen at Cheltenham occurred to him.

There was a stoppage in the door-way between the two rooms, and it was at this moment Sir Edward said in the ear of the colonel, "Who is your fair friend?"

"Do you not know her, Sir Edward? . . . It is Miss Willoughby."

"What, the girl! . . . the person we saw at . . . Nonsense, Montague! Who is it?"

Colonel Hubert shrugged his shoulders at the incredulity of his brother-in-law, and quietly replying, "I have told you all I know," took advantage of a movement among the crowd in the door-way, and led his fair companion through it.

In the short interval occasioned by this stoppage, Agnes so far recovered her composure as to become very keenly alive to the importance of the next few moments to her happiness. . . . Should Lady Elizabeth look harshly, or Lady Stephenson coldly upon her, of what avail would be all the blessings that fate and affection had showered upon her favoured head? . . . And then it was that, for the first time, she felt the full extent of all she owed to Miss Compton; for the consciousness that she was no longer a penniless, desolate dependant, came to her mind at that moment with a feeling ten thousand times more welcome than any display of her aunt's hoarded wealth had ever brought; and the recollection that, in speak-

ing of her to Mrs. Peters, Miss Compton had almost pompously called her "my heiress," and "the inheritor of my paternal acres, and some twenty thousand pounds beside," which at the time had in some sort been painful for her to listen to, was at that agitating moment recalled with a degree of satisfaction that might have been strangely misinterpreted had those around her been aware of it. . . . Some might have traced the feeling to pride, and some to vain self-consequence; but, in truth, it arose from a deep-seated sense of humility that blessed anything likely to lessen the awful distance she felt between herself and Hubert in the eyes of his relations.

But with all the aid she could draw from such considerations her cheek was colourless, and her eyes full of tears, when she found herself standing almost like a culprit before the dignified old lady, whose favour she had once gained in a manner so un hoped for, whom she feared she had deeply offended since, and on whose present feelings towards her hung all her hopes of happiness in life.

It was not at the first glance that her timid but inquiring eye could learn her sentence, for the expressive countenance of the old lady underwent more than one change before she spoke. At first it very unequivocally indicated astonishment . . . then came a smile that as plainly told of admiration (at which moment, by the way, her ladyship became impressed with the firmest conviction that the nose of the honourable Miss Nivett, and that of Miss Willoughby, were formed on the same model), and at last, whatever intention of reserve might have possessed her, it all melted away, and she held out both her hands with both aspect and words of very cordial welcome.

The heart of Agnes gave a bound as these words reached her; and the look of animated happiness which succeeded to the pale melancholy that sat upon her features when she first approached, touched the old lady so sensibly, that nothing but the presence of the crowd around prevented her throwing her arms around her in a fond embrace.

Lady Stephenson was from the first instant all affectionate kindness, and even Sir Edward, who had hitherto never appeared to think it necessary that his lady's singing favourite should occupy much of his attention, now put himself forward to claim her acquaintance, apologising for not having known her at first, by saying, "The change of dress, Miss Willoughby,

must be my excuse ; you have left off mourning since I saw you last."

Agnes smiled and bowed, and appeared not to have been in the least degree affronted ; in fact, she was at that moment too happy to be otherwise than pleased with everybody in the world.

Meanwhile, Colonel Hubert stood looking at her with love, admiration, and astonishment, that fully equalled that of his aunt ; but the contemplation did not bring him happiness. Without settling the balance very accurately in his own mind, perhaps, he had hitherto felt conscious that his station and fortune (independent at least, if not large), might be set against her youth . . . that constant stumbling-block of his felicity . . . and her surpassing beauty. But there was something in the change from simplicity of dress that almost approached to homeliness, to the costly elegance of costume that was now before him, which seemed to indicate a position to which his own no longer presented so very favourable a contrast. She no longer appeared to be the Agnes to obtain whom he must make a sacrifice that would prove beyond all doubt the vastness of his love, and he trembled as he beheld her the principal object of attention and the theme of avowed admiration throughout the room.

Lady Elizabeth very unceremoniously made room for her next herself, by desiring a gentleman who occupied the seat beside her, which was on a small sofa filling the recess by the chimney, to leave it.

" I beg a thousand pardons, sir, but I see no other place in the room where we could hope for space to sit thus *tête-à-tête* together, and did you know how near and dear she was to me, you would, I am sure, excuse me."

The gentleman, though not a young one, assured her, with the appearance of much sincerity, that to yield a seat to such a young lady could be considered only as honour and happiness by every man. Having thus established her restored favourite at her side, Lady Elizabeth began to whisper innumerable questions about Miss Compton.

" How came it, my dear," said she, " that when opening your heart to Emily and me upon the subject of your unfortunate situation with Mrs. Barnaby, you never referred to the possibility of placing yourself under the protection of Miss Compton ? "

"Because my aunt Compton, having quarrelled with my aunt Barnaby, had refused to take any further notice of me,— Mrs. Barnaby at least led me to believe during the six or seven months I passed with her, that every application on my part to Miss Compton would be vain, . . . and it was only the dreadful predicament into which Mrs. Barnaby's arrest threw me, that gave me the desperate courage which I thought necessary for applying to her. But I have since learned, Lady Elizabeth, that at any time one word from me would have sufficed to make her leave her retirement, as she now has done and remove me from my dreadful situation."

"But it appears that she is not only a kind aunt, but a wealthy one, my dear child. . . . Excuse the observation Agnes, . . . situated as we now are together, you cannot deem it impertinent, . . . but your dress indicates as great and as favourable a change in pecuniary matters, as your letter, and your happy countenance, announces in all others. . . . Miss Compton, I presume, is a woman of fortune?"

"Her fortune is larger than I imagined it to be," replied Agnes. "She lived with great economy before she adopted me."

"And do you know what her intentions are, Agnes?" rejoined the persevering old lady. "It is only as the aunt of Colonel Hubert . . . remember this, my dear . . . it is only as Colonel Hubert's aunt that I ask the question."

Agnes blushed with most happy consciousness as she replied. "The interest you so kindly take in me confers both honour and happiness, and however averse to boast of the kindness bestowed, and promised by my dear aunt, I can have no wish to hide from you, Lady Elizabeth, all she has said to me. She knows the honour that has been done me by Colonel Hubert, and knows too, that nothing but the fear of your displeasure could have made me hesitate to accept it; . . . and she says, that should no such displeasure interfere, she would bestow a fortune on me."

"Well, my dear, . . . I don't believe that any such displeasure is likely to interfere. When will you introduce us to her?"

"To-morrow, Lady Elizabeth!" . . . Agnes eagerly replied, "if you will give us leave to wait upon you."

"Yes, that is right, my dear, quite right. . . . She must call on me first, . . . and yet I am not quite sure of that

either . . . I rather think the friends of the gentleman should wait upon the friends of the lady, . . . and so I will call upon her to-morrow morning, and remember, when you have introduced us to each other, you may go away; we must talk on business. What is her address?"

Agnes gave the address very distinctly, which was repeated in the same manner by Lady Elizabeth, just as Mrs. Pemberton approached to entreat her permission to lead her to the piano-forte. "You are going to sing, my dear child! Very good. . . . I shall be delighted to hear you. . . . And you must get me a place where I can both look at and listen to her, Mrs. Pemberton," said Lady Elizabeth.

Considerably surprised, but much pleased to find that the acquaintance she had condescended to make with Mrs. Peters had led to her having the honour of receiving so intimate a friend and favourite of her most illustrious guest, Mrs. Pemberton rather ostentatiously performed the service required of her, and Agnes once more stood up to sing with Lady Elizabeth's arm-chair almost as near to her as on the happy night when she first won the old lady's heart at Cheltenham.

But where was Colonel Hubert? . . . He had stood anxiously watching the first few words that passed between his aunt and Agnes; and when he saw her cavalier dismissal of her neighbour, and the cordial style of amity with which she pursued her conversation with the beautiful interloper, he almost forgot his doubts and fears in the happiness of seeing one obstacle so decidedly removed; and prudently denying himself the pleasure of being near them, lest his presence might render the conversation less confidential, he withdrew to the other room, and only appeared again before the eyes of Agnes when he took his place beside her to turn over the pages of her song.

For the first few moments Agnes feared that she was too happy to sing; . . . but she tried, and found that her voice was clear, and was determined that it should soon be steady, for she wished . . . let youthful ladies judge how ardently . . . to renew the impression which she had made on Colonel Hubert on that never-to-be-forgotten evening when she first dared to fancy he loved her.

Nor were her wishes vain. She sang as well, and he felt as strongly as before. Her pleasure as she watched this was perfect, but his was very far from being so; he saw that

was the centre of attraction, and not only, as before, the admired of every eye, and the enchanter of every ear, but also the most distinguished, fashionable, and important young lady present.

There was not, however, a shadow of the paltry feeling called jealousy in this ; the pang that smote his heart arose from memory, and not from imagination. Could he, as he now saw this elegant girl the centre of fashion, and the petted favourite of his own proud aunt, forget the generous devoted passion of the unfortunate Frederic ? Could he forget that he had used all the influence which the young man's affection to himself had lent him, to make him abandon an attachment so every way calculated to ensure his happiness ? . . . Could he forget that Frederic was now living an exile from his country, the victim of unhappy love, while he, his trusted confidant but most pernicious adviser, remained to profit by the absence he himself had caused, and to drain the cup of happiness which his hand had dashed from the lips of his wretched friend ?

As long as Mrs. Barnaby continued to hang about her, and in some degree to overshadow her with the disgrace of her vulgar levity, Agnes could not be loved without a sacrifice, and the youth and splendid fortune of Frederic Stephenson, as well as the peculiarly strong feelings of his family on the subject, might have stood as reasons why another, less fettered by circumstances, might have married her, though he could not. But how stood the matter now ? Agnes had been snatched from Mrs. Barnaby, and borne completely beyond the sphere of her influence ; Stephenson's proud brother seemed to bow before her, while his wife selected her as a chosen friend ; and worse, a thousand times worse than all the rest, he had learnt, while he wandered among the company before the music commenced, that Agnes was the proclaimed heiress of fifteen hundred a-year. This last, however, for his comfort, he did not believe ; but there was enough without it to make him feel that, should he even be so blessed as to teach her to forget the difference of their age, and make her young heart his own, he must, by becoming her husband, appear to the friend who had trusted him as one of the veriest traitors *under heaven*.

Such thoughts were enough to jar the sweetest harmony ; *and the evening* was altogether productive of more pain than

pleasure to the unfortunate Colonel Hubert, who having staked his happiness on a marriage, only to be obtained by the consent of his aunt, was now suffering martyrdom from a plethora of success, and would have gladly changed his condition back to what it had been when, regardless of consequences, he had laid his heart at the feet of Agnes by the light of her one tallow-candle in Half-moon Street, while her sole protectress lay imprisoned in the Fleet.

When the party broke up, Colonel Hubert, leaving his aunt to the care of Sir Edward, escorted Mrs. Peters and the four young ladies down stairs, where another shock awaited him on hearing her servant inquire which carriage should be called up first, for, before answering, Mrs. Peters turned to Agnes, and said, —

“To which name are your servants accustomed to answer, my dear? Miss Compton told me you would have your own carriage here, but perhaps this might only be another mode of saying you would have hers. Shall they call Miss Compton’s carriage, or Miss Willoughby’s, Agnes?”

“They will answer to either, I believe,” replied Agnes carelessly, for she was waiting for Colonel Hubert to finish something he was saying to her.

“Call Miss Willoughby’s carriage, then,” said Mrs. Peters to the servants in waiting. . . . And “Miss Willoughby’s carriage! Miss Willoughby’s carriage!” resounded along the hall, and through the street.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEMONSTRATING THE HEAVY SORROW WHICH MAY BE PRODUCED BY A YOUNG LADY’S HAVING A LARGER FORTUNE THAN HER LOVER EXPECTED.

Miss Compton was not long kept waiting for the appearance of her promised visitor on the following morning, for before twelve o’clock Lady Elizabeth Norris arrived. Agnes very punctually obeyed the commands that had been given her, and having properly introduced the two old ladies to each other, left them together, and hastened at length to satisfy the anxious curiosity of her friend Mary, by giving her a full account of

all the circumstances that had led to the happy change in her prospects.

Her tale was listened to with unbroken attention, and when it was ended Miss Peters exclaimed—

“ Now then, I forgive you, Agnes, and only now, for not returning the love of that very pleasant person Frederic Stephenson ; . . . for I do believe it is nearly impossible for a young lady to be in love with two gentlemen at once, and I now perceive beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the superb colonel turned your head from the very first moment that you looked . . . not up on, but up to him. How very strange it is,” she continued, “ that I should never have suspected the cause of that remarkable refusal ! . . . I imagine my dulness arose from my humility ; I was conscious myself that I should quite as soon have taken the liberty of falling in love with the autocrat of all the Russias as with Colonel Hubert, and it therefore never occurred to me that you could be guilty of such audacity ; nevertheless, I will not deny that he is a husband to be proud of . . . and so I wish you joy heartily . . . But do tell me,” she added after a moment’s meditation, “ how you mean to manage about Mr. Stephenson ? . . . Your first meeting will be rather awkward, will it not ? ”

“ I fear so,” replied Agnes, gravely. “ But there is no help for it, and I must get over it as well as I can . . . fortunately none of the family have the slightest idea of any such thing, and I hope they never will.”

“ I hope so, too, dear. But it would be very unpleasant, would it not ? if, upon hearing what is going on, he were to burst in among you, and insist upon shooting Colonel Hubert ? ”

This was said playfully, and without a shadow of serious meaning ; but it rendered Agnes extremely uneasy, and it required some skill and perseverance on the part of Miss Peters to remove the effect of what she had said. There were, however, too many pleasant points of discourse among the multitude of subjects before them, for her young spirits to cling long to the only one that seemed capable of giving her pain, and on the whole their long and uninterrupted conference was highly gratifying to them both.

While this was going on in Rodney Place, something of the same kind, but without any drawback at all, was proceeding in the Mall, between the two old ladies, the result of which may

be given more shortly by relating what passed between Lady Elizabeth and her nephew afterwards, than by following them through the whole of their very interesting but somewhat desultory conversation.

Colonel Hubert was awaiting the return of his aunt with much anxiety; an anxiety, by the way, which proceeded wholly from the fear that what she might have to report should prove his Agnes to be *un meilleur parti* than he wished to find her. This singular species of uneasiness was in no degree lessened by the aspect of the old lady as she entered the drawing-room in which he was waiting to receive her.

"This is a very singular romance, Montague, as ever I remember to have heard of," she began. "Here is this pretty creature, who was introduced to us as niece and adopted child, as I fancied, of the vulgarest and most atrociously absurd woman in England, without money or wit enough to keep her out of jail, and now she turns out to be a young lady of large fortune, perfectly well educated, and well descended on both sides of her house . . . and all this, too, without any legerdemain, *dévoûemens*, or discoveries . . . I wish you joy heartily, Montague . . . Her fortune is exactly what was wanted to make yours comfortable . . . she has fifteen hundred a-year, part of which is, by Miss Compton's account, a very improvable estate in Devonshire;—but I suspect the old lady will like to give a name to your second son, or should you have no second son, to a daughter. Nor can I blame her for this. By her account, Compton of Compton Basett has endured long enough in the land to render the wish that it should not pass away, a very reasonable one; especially for the person who holds, and has to bequeath the estate, to which it has for centuries been annexed; so that point, I presume, you will not cavil at. You must take care, however, that the liberal-minded old gentlewoman, in making this noble settlement on her niece, does not leave herself too bare . . . She talked of the *trifle* that would follow at her death . . . This ought not to be a trifle, and were I you, Montague, I would insist that the amount settled on Agnes at your marriage should not exceed one thousand a-year . . . This, with the next step in your profession, will make your income a very sufficient one, even without the regiment which you have such fair reason to hope for."

During the whole of this harangue Colonel Hubert was

suffering very severely ; till by the time her ladyship had concluded, his imagination became so morbidly alive, that he almost fancied himself already in the presence of his injured friend. . . . he fancied him hastening home to be a witness at his marriage, and gazing with a cold reproachful eye as the beauty, the wealth, the connections of Agnes were all shown to be exactly what his friends would have approved for him, had not a false, a base, an interested adviser contrived to render vain his generous and honourable love, that he might win the precious prize himself.

What a picture was this for such a mind as Hubert's to contemplate ! . . . Had not Lady Elizabeth been exceedingly occupied by the curious and unexpected discoveries she had made concerning the race and the rents of the Comptons, she must have perceived how greatly the effect of her statement was the reverse of pleasurable to her auditor ; but in truth her attention was not fixed upon him, but upon Miss Compton, whom she considered as one of the most remarkable originals she had ever met with, and ceased not to congratulate herself upon the happy chance which had turned her yielding kindness to her nephew into a source of so much interesting speculation to herself. . . . Receiving no answer to the speech she had made, she added very good-humouredly, —

“ That's all, Mr. Benedict. . . . Now you may depart to look for the young lady, and you may tell her, if you please, that upon the whole I very much doubt if the united kingdoms might not be ransacked through, without finding any one I should more completely approve in all ways as the wife of Montague Hubert. . . . Poor Sir Edward. . . . How he will wish that all his anxieties respecting his hare-brained brother had been brought to a termination by the young man's having had the wit to fall in love with this sweet girl instead of you ; . . . but I doubt if Frederic Stephenson has sufficient taste and refinement of mind to appreciate such a girl as Agnes. . . . He probably overlooked her altogether, or perhaps amused himself more by quizzing the absurdities of the aunt than by paying any particular attention to her delicate and unobtrusive niece. It required such a mind as yours, Montague, to overcome all the apparent obstacles and objections with which she was surrounded. . . . I honour you for it, and so, perhaps, will your giddy-headed friend too, when he comes to know her. *She is a gem that we shall all have reason to be proud of.*”

Colonel Hubert could bear no more, but muttering something about wishing immediately to write letters, he hurried out of the room, and shut himself into the parlour which had been appropriated to his morning use. Without giving himself time to think very deliberately of the comparative good and evil that might ensue, he seized a pen, and wrote the following letter to Mr. Stephenson.

“DEAR FREDERICK,

“We parted painfully, and my regard for you is too sincere for me to endure the idea of meeting again with equal pain. I have had reason, since you left England, to believe, that notwithstanding the very objectionable manners and conduct of Mrs. Barnaby, her niece, Miss Willoughby, is in every way worthy of the attachment you conceived for her; nay, that her family and fortune are such as even your brother and sisters would approve. I will not conceal from you that there are others who have discovered (though not so early as yourself) the attractions and the merits of Miss Willoughby; but who can say, Frederick, that if your early and generous devotion were made known to her, she might not give you the preference over those who were less prompt in surrendering their affections than yourself? If, then, your feelings towards her continue to be the same as when we parted at our breakfast table at Clifton . . . and this I cannot doubt, for Agnes is not formed to be loved once, and then forgotten . . . if you still love her, Frederick, hasten home, and take the advantage which your early conceived and unhesitating affection gives you over those who saw her more than once, before they discovered how important she was to their happiness.

“Notwithstanding the impatience with which you listened to my remonstrances on the subject of a connexion with Mrs. Barnaby, I believe that they were in truth the cause of your abandoning a pursuit in which your heart was deeply interested; and so believing, I cannot rest till I have told you that a marriage with Miss Willoughby no longer involves the necessity of any personal intercourse with Mrs. Barnaby. They are separated, and probably for ever.

“Believe me, now and for ever,

“Very faithfully your friend,

“MONTAGUE HUBERT.”

The effort necessary for writing and despatching this letter by the post was of service to him; it tended to make him feel more reconciled to himself, and less impatient under the infliction of hearing the favoured position of Miss Willoughby decanted upon. But much anxiety, much suffering, still remained How should he again meet Agnes? Despite a thousand dear suspicions to the contrary, he could not wholly conquer the belief that it was her indifference, or some feeling connected with the disparity of their age, which dictated the too-well-remembered words "I never will be your wife;" and his best consolation under the terrible idea that he had recalled a rival to compete with him, arose from feeling that if, when his own proposals and those of Frederick were both before her, she should bestow herself on him, he might and must believe that, spite of his thirty-five years, she loved him; but though he hailed such comfort as might be got from this, it could not enable him to see Agnes, while this uncertainty remained, without such a degree of restraint as must convert all intercourse with her into misery.

Agnes meanwhile was indulging herself with all the happy confidence of youthful friendship in relating to her friend every thing that had happened since they parted, and returned to the Mall soon after Lady Elizabeth had left it, with a heart glowing with love, gratitude, hope, and joy. The narrative with which Miss Compton welcomed her, was just all she wished and expected; and when told that the evening was to be passed at the lodgings of Lady Elizabeth Norris, she thanked the delighted old lady for the intelligence with a kiss that spoke her gladness better than any words could have done.

The evening came, and found the aunt and niece ready to keep their engagement, with such an equality of happiness expressed in the countenance of each, as might leave it doubtful which enjoyed the prospect of it the most. The pretty dress of Agnes, with all its simplicity, was rather more studied than usual; and it was the consciousness of this, perhaps, which occasioned her to blush so beautifully when Miss Compton made her a laughing compliment upon the delicate style of it. . . .

"You look like a lily, my Agnes!" said the old lady, gazing at her with fond admiration. "You have certainly got very tired of black, my dear child, for I perceive that

whenever you wish to look very nice, you select unmixed white for your decoration."

"I think it best expresses the change in my condition," replied Agnes. "Oh! my dear aunt, . . . how very, very happy you have made me!"

Nothing could be more gratifying than the manner in which they were received by Lady Elizabeth, Lady Stephenson, and Sir Edward; . . . but Colonel Hubert was not in the drawing-room when they entered. For a short time, however, his absence was not regretted, even by Agnes, as she was not sorry for the opportunity it gave her of receiving the affectionate congratulations of her future sister, and it was with a feeling likely to produce much lasting love between them, that the one related, and the other listened to, the history of Colonel Hubert's return from London, of his first bold avowal of his love to his aunt, and of the comfort he had found in the reception given to this avowal by Lady Stephenson herself; . . . but still Colonel Hubert came not; and at length Lady Elizabeth exclaimed, with a spice of her usual vivacity, . . .

"Upon my word, I believe that Montague is writing an account of his felicity to every officer in the British army. . . . He darted out of the room this morning before I had half finished what I had to say to him. . . . He hardly spoke three words while dinner lasted, and off he was again as soon as the cloth was removed, and each time something about writing letters was the only intelligible words I got from him. . . . I wish you would go, Sir Edward, and see if he is writing letters now, . . . and I will ring for tea. . . . I mean to make Montague sing to-night with Agnes. Emily has taken care that you should have a good piano, my dear . . . and you must take care that, while I stay here, I have music enough to make up for the loss of my menagerie, . . . for I don't think I shall begin collecting again just yet."

Sir Edward obeyed the old lady's wishes, and when the tea was half over, returned with his brother-in-law. This was the first time that Colonel Hubert had been seen by Miss Compton, and the moment was not a favourable one for removing the idea which she had originally conceived, of his being too old for the lover and husband of her beautiful niece. He was looking pale, harassed, and fatigued; but while Agnes feared only that he might be unwell, her aunt,

though she could not deny that he was a gentleman of a most noble presence (it was thus she expressed herself in speaking of him to Mrs. Peters), thought that it was strange so young a girl should have fixed her fancy upon him in preference to all the world beside. In fact, Miss Compton's notions of a lover being drawn solely from the imaginary models she had made acquaintance with among her bees and flowers, she would have been better pleased to see a bright-eyed youth of twenty-one as the hero of her own romance, than the dignified but melancholy man who now stood before her. Having received his salutation, and returned it with that tone and look of intelligent cheerfulness which redeemed all she said from any imputation of want of polish, or deficiency of high-bred elegance, she turned her eyes on the face of Agnes, and there she read such speaking testimony of love and admiration, that all her romantic wishes for her perfect bliss were satisfied; and following the direction of those speaking eyes, and once more examining the features and person of Hubert, she satisfied herself by the conviction, that if not young, he was supremely elegant; and that if his complexion had lost its bloom, his manners had attained a degree of dignity superior, as she thought, to any thing described among the young gentlemen whose images were familiar to her imagination.

It was slowly that Colonel Hubert approached Agnes, and mournfully that he gazed upon her; but there was to her feelings a pleasure in his presence, which for a long time prevented her being fully conscious that he, on his part, was not so happy as she had hoped it was in her power to make him. By degrees, however, the conviction of this sad truth made its way to her heart, and from that moment her joy and gladness faded, drooped, and died away, like a flower into which a gnawing worm has found its way, and nestled in the very core. This did not happen on this first evening of their meeting under the roof of Lady Elizabeth, for Agnes indulged her with every song she desired to hear. Lady Stephenson sang too, nor could Colonel Hubert refuse to join them, so that to the unsuspecting Agnes that evening seemed delightful; but a *silent, melancholy walk* on the following morning made her *ask herself* where was the ardent love for which he had *pleaded* in Half-Moon Street? . . . Had she mistaken him *when he said* that his happiness depended wholly on her? . . . *And if not, what was it* had turned him thus to stone?

Poor Agnes ! . . . she could have no confidant in this new sorrow. Her aunt Compton and her friend Mary had both spoken of him as too old to be a lover ; and did she breathe to either a fear that his affection had already grown cold, might they not tell her that it was but natural ? . . . Such words she thought would break her heart, for every hour he became dearer to her than before, as she saw he was unhappy ; and, thinking more of him than of herself, mourned more for his sorrow, of which she knew nothing, than for her own, though it was rapidly undermining her health and destroying her bloom.

CHAPTER XIV.

RETURNS TO MRS. BARNABY, AND RELATES SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE SCENES OF HER LIFE, TOGETHER WITH SEVERAL CIRCUMSTANCES RELATIVE TO ONE DEARER TO HER THAN HERSELF.

'THE real heroine of this love story has been left too long, and it is necessary we should return to see in what way her generous friendship for Mr. O'Donagough was likely to end. Having kept her promise, and paid the debt for which he had been detained, as well as comforted him by the farther loan of 2*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.*, she stated to him her intention of remaining for a month longer at her lodgings in Half-Moon Street, adding, with a degree of *naïveté* that O'Donagough felt to be extremely touching,—

"Let this be a month of probation, my dear friend, for us both. We met under circumstances too much calculated to soften the heart, for either of us, perhaps, to be able fairly to judge how we may feel when those circumstances are past. Let me see as much of you as your occupations will permit . . . I shall dine at five o'clock, because the evenings are drawing in, and I don't love candle-light before dinner. . . . You will always find a steak or a chop, and a little brandy and water, or something of that sort. . . . And now adieu ! . . . This is a disagreeable place to pay or receive visits in, and I flatter myself that I now leave it for ever."

Let the most glowing gratitude that heart can feel be set forth in words of fluent eloquence such as befit the class

which Mr. O'Donagough belonged, and the answer which he gave to this speech will be the product.

Nevertheless, Mr. O'Donagough knew what it meant perfectly well. It meant that the Widow Barnaby, although she had made up her mind to give herself and whatever she might happen to possess to a husband, and although she was exceedingly well inclined to let that husband be Mr. Patrick O'Donagough, she did not intend to go thus far in manifesting her favour towards him, without knowing a little more than she did at present respecting the state of his affairs. In a word, he perceived, as he repeated to himself, with an approving smile, —

That though on *marriage* she was bent,
She had a prudent mind.

Nor was he, notwithstanding the little irregularities into which he had heretofore fallen, unworthy of becoming an object of tender attention to Mrs. Barnaby. Much as he admired her, he had steeled his soul to the virtuous resolution of putting a sudden stop to all farther intercourse between them, should he find upon inquiry that prudence did not justify its continuance.

Whatever deficiency of wisdom, therefore, the conduct of either had before shown, it was evident that both were now actuated by a praiseworthy spirit of forethought that ought to have insured the felicity of their future years.

It will be evident to all who study the state of the widow's mind at this period, that she had considerably lowered the tone of her hopes and expectations from the moment she became aware of the defection of Lord Mucklebury. The shock which her hopes had received by the disagreeable *dénouement* of her engagement with Major Allen had been perfectly cured, at least for a time, by the devotion of the noble viscount; and so well satisfied was she herself at an escape which had left her free to aim at a quarry so infinitely higher, that what had been a mortification turned to a triumph, and she enjoyed the idea, that when "she seemed to slip," she had so gloriously recovered herself as to leave Mrs. Peters, and other envious wonderers, cause to exclaim, "She rises higher half her length!" But from the time this coroneted bubble burst, her courage fell. Her arrest was another blow. . . . Mr. Morrison's desertion one heavier still and little as she cared for Agnes,

or, in truth, for any body living but herself, the manner of her departure vexed and humbled her.

"That crooked hag thinks she has made me trouble to her!" she exclaimed, as her aunt and her niece drove off, on the night that Agnes first took up her abode with Miss Compton. . . . "She thinks that because she spent some of her beggars' money to hire a carriage in order to bully me, I shall count myself despised and forsaken. But the spiteful old maid shall hear of my being married again, and that will be worm-wood, I'll answer for it."

It was in this spirit that she set about inquiring into the private character and prospects of young Mr. O'Donoghue, and her first step in the business showed at once her judgment and her zeal.

In the history he had given of himself, he had spoken of a certain most respectable bookseller, who (as he modestly hinted), knowing his worth, and the exemplary manner in which he had turned from horse-racing to preaching, had exerted himself in the kindest manner to obtain some situation for him that should atone for the severity of his father. It was to him he had owed the engagement as domestic chaplain in the family of the nobleman formerly mentioned, and it was to him Mrs. Barnaby addressed herself for information that might lead to an engagement of still greater importance.

It was not, however, her purpose that her real object should be known, and she, therefore, framed her inquiries in such a manner as to lead Mr. Newbirth to suppose that her object was to obtain either a teacher or a preacher for her family circle.

Having made it known that she wished a few minutes' private conversation with the principal, she was shown into a parlour by one of the clerks, and civilly requested to sit down for a few minutes till Mr. Newbirth could wait upon her. It must be the fault of every individual so placed, if such few minutes have not turned to good account; for the table of this exemplary publisher was covered elbow-deep in tracts, sermons, missionary reports, mystical magazines, and the like: but as Mrs. Barnaby was not habitually a reader, she did not profit so much as she might have done by her situation, and, before Mr. Newbirth's arrival, had begun to think the "few minutes" mentioned by his clerk were unusually long ones.

At length, however, he appeared, and then it was impos-

sible to think she had waited too long for him, for the gentle suavity of his demeanour made even a moment of his presence invaluable.

"You have business with me, madam?" he said, with his heels gracefully fixed together, and his person bent forward in humble salutation, as far as was consistent with the safety of his nose "Pray do not rise. I have now five minutes that I can spare, without neglecting any serious duty;" and so saying, he placed himself opposite to the lady in act to listen.

"I have taken the liberty of waiting upon you, sir," replied Mrs. Barnaby, a little alarmed at the hint that her business must be completed in the space of five minutes, "in order to make some inquiries respecting a Mr. O'Donagough, who is, I believe, known to you?"

"Mr. O'Donagough? The Rev. Mr. O'Donagough, madam?"

The widow, though well disposed to enlarge her knowledge, and extend the limits of her principles, was not yet fully initiated into the mysteries of regenerated ordinations, and therefore replied, as the daughter of an English clergyman might well be excused for doing — "No, sir the gentleman I mean is Mr. Patrick O'Donagough; he was not brought up to the church."

But there was something in the phrase, "*brought up to the church*," that grated against the feelings of Mr. Newbirth, and his brow contracted, and his voice became exceedingly solemn, as he said, "I know Mr. Patrick O'Donagough, who, like many other shining lights, was not *brought up to the church*, but has, nevertheless, received the title of reverend from the congregation which has the best right to bestow it, even that to which he has been called to preach."

Mrs. Barnaby was not slow in perceiving her mistake, and proceeded with her inquiries in such a manner as to prove that she was not unworthy to intercommune either with Mr. Newbirth himself, or any of those to whom he extended his patronage. The result of the interview was highly satisfactory; for though it seemed clear that Mr. Newbirth was *aware of the vexatious accident* which had for some months checked the young preacher's career, it was equally evident, that the circumstance made no unfavourable impression, and Mrs. Barnaby returned to her lodgings with the pleasing con-

viction that now, at least, there could be no danger in giving way to the tender feeling which had so repeatedly beguiled her. "The reverend Mr. O'Donagough" would look very well in the paragraph which she was determined should record her marriage in the Exeter paper; and being quite determined that the three hundred and twenty-seven pounds *per annum*, which still remained of her income, should be firmly settled on herself, she received her handsome friend when he arrived at the hour of dinner, in a manner which showed he had lost nothing in her esteem since they parted.

It had so happened, that within half an hour of the widow's quitting the shop of Mr. Newbirth, Mr. O'Donagough entered it. His patron received him very graciously, and failed not to mention the visit he had received, which, though not elucidated by the lady's leaving any name, was perfectly well understood by the person principally concerned.

There are some men who might have felt offended by learning that such a means of improving acquaintance had been resorted to; but its effect on Mr. O'Donagough was exactly the reverse. His respect and estimation for the widow were infinitely increased thereby; for though still a young man, he had considerable experience, and he felt assured, that if Mrs. Barnaby had not something to bestow besides her fair fat hand, she would have been less cautious in letting it follow where it was so certain her heart had gone before.

The conviction thus logically obtained assisted the progress of the affair very essentially. Having learnt from Mr. Newbirth that the place he had lost by the ill-timed arrest was filled by another who was not likely to give it up again, he once more contrived to make his way to the presence of his father, and gave him very clearly to understand, that the very best thing he could do would be once more to furnish the means for his departure from Europe.

"That you may spend it again at the gaming-table, you audacious scamp!" responded his noble but incensed progenitor.

"Not so, sir," replied the soft-voiced young preacher; "you are not yet aware of the change in my principles, or you would have no such injurious suspicion."

"As to your principles, Pat," replied his lordship, beguiled into a smile by the sanctified solemnity of his versatile son,

"I do not comprehend how you could change them, seeing that you never had any."

"Then, instead of principles, sir, let me speak of practice: it is now several months since I exchanged the snuff-box, the billiard-table, and the dice-box, for the sword of an extemporary preacher. I am afraid, my lord, that your taste rather leads you to performances of a different kind, or I would ask you to attend the meeting at which I am to expound next Wednesday evening, after which you could hardly doubt, I imagine, the sincerity of my conversion."

"It would be putting your eloquence to rather a severe test, Master Patrick. But if you have really got a stomach to preach in at home, why, in the devil's name, should you bother me again about going abroad?"

"Because, my lord, I have no fixed stipend, or any other honest and safe means of getting my bread; and also because there are many other reasons which make it desirable that I should leave this country."

"That at least is likely enough, to be sure, Mr. O'Donoghue. But have the kindness to tell me what security you would give me for taking yourself off, if I were again to furnish the means for it."

This was exactly the point to which the reformed man wished to bring the yielding father; for it was not difficult to show many reasons for believing that he was in earnest in his intention to depart with as little delay as possible. It was with great caution, however, that he hinted at the possibility of his taking a lady with him as his wife, whose fortune was sufficient to prevent the necessity of his returning again to beg for bread, even at the risk of liberty or life; for he found that if he confessed the prosperous state of his matrimonial hopes, they might be held sufficient for his necessities. But here he was mistaken; for no sooner did his father discover that his case was not quite desperate, than he manifested a considerable softening, and before a fortnight had elapsed, Mr. O'Donoghue was able to convince the ensnared widow that, in uniting her destiny to his, she would be yielding to no sinful weakness, but securing both her temporal and eternal felicity on the firmest footing possible. And now every thing went on in so prosperous a manner, as almost to dispense the truth of the oft-quoted assertion of the poet,

"The course of true love never did run smooth."

the loves of Mr. O'Donagough and Mrs. Barnaby met with not even a possible of opposition as they ran evenly on towards matrimony.

This peaceful and pleasant progress was not a little assisted by a visit which the prudent peer deemed it advisable to make to the intended bride. Nothing could be more agreeable to the feelings of the lady than this attention, nothing more advantageous to the interests of both parties than the result. His lordship ascertained to a certainty that the widow had wherewithal to feed his son, and most obligingly took care that it should be so secured as to place her fortune beyond the reach of any relapse on his part, while the fair lady herself, amidst all the gentle sweetness with which she seemed to let his lordship manage every thing, took excellent care of herself.

One thing only now remained to be settled before the marriage took place, and this was the obtaining an appointment as missionary to a congregation newly established in a beautiful part of Australia, where there was every reason to suppose that a large and brilliant society would soon give as much *éclat* to the successful efforts of an eloquent preacher as could be hoped for in the most fashionable *réunion* of saints in the mother-country. The appointment was, in effect, left in the hands of one or two, whose constant exertions, and never-let-any-thing-escape-them habits, made them of personal importance in every decision of the kind. This little committee agreed to meet at Mr. Newbirth's on a certain evening, for the purpose of being introduced to Mrs. Barnaby, and it was understood among them, that if they found reason to be satisfied with her principles, and probable usefulness in a new congregation, the appointment should be given to Mr. O'Donagough, whose approaching marriage with her was well known to them all.

Mrs. Newbirth, who was quite a model of a wife, and who, therefore, shared all her husband's peculiar notions respecting things in heaven and earth, very obligingly lent her assistance at this important session, both to prevent Mrs. Barnaby's feeling herself awkward, as being the only lady present, and because it was reasonably supposed that she might be useful in giving the conversation such a turn as should elicit some of the more hidden, but not, therefore, the least important traits of female character.

It was not intended that either Mr. O'Donagough or his

intended bride should be aware of the importance attached to this tea-drinking in Mr. Newbirth's drawing-room; but the expectant missionary had not lived thirty years in this wicked world for nothing; and though the invitation was given in the most impromptu style possible, he instantly suspected that the leaders of the congregation, who were about to send out the mission, intended to make this an opportunity for discovering what manner of woman the future Mrs. O'Donagough might be. Considerable anxiety was the consequence of this idea in the mind of Mr. O'Donagough. He liked the thoughts of preaching and lecturing to the ladies and gentlemen of Modeltown, and therefore determined to spare no pains in preparing the widow for the trial that awaited her. He found her by no means unapt at receiving the hints he gave respecting several important articles of faith, which, although new to her, she seemed willing enough to adopt without much inquiry, but he had a hard struggle before he could obtain the straightening of a single ringlet, or the paling, in the slightest degree, the tint of her glowing rouge. At length, however, the contest ended by his declaring that, without her compliance on this point, he should feel it his duty, passionately as he adored her, to delay their marriage till she could be induced, for his sake, to conform herself a little more to the customs and manners of the sect to which he belonged. Mrs. Barnaby's heart was not proof against such a remonstrance as this; her resolution melted into tears, and she promised that if he never would utter such cruel words again, he should dress her hair himself in any manner he would choose. "As to my rouge," she added, "I have only worn it, my dear O'Donagough, because I consider it as the appendage of a woman of fashion . . . but I will wear much less, that is to say, almost none at all, for the fashion, if such shall be your wish."

"Thank you, my dear, . . . that's all right, and I'll never plague you about it, after I once get the appointment; only do what I bid you to-night, and we'll snap our fingers at them afterwards."

The party assembled at Mr. Newbirth's consisted of himself and his lady, and four gentlemen belonging to "the congregation" which was to be propitiated. After the tea and coffee had disappeared, Mr. Newbirth, who was the only gentleman in the company (except her own O'Donagough) with whom Mrs. Barnaby was personally acquainted, opened the conversation

tion, by asking if the change of residence which she contemplated, from one side of the world to the other, was an agreeable prospect to her.

"Very much so, indeed!" was the reply.

"I suppose you are aware, ma'am," observed Mr. Littleton, who was senior clerk in a banking-house, and the principal lay orator of the congregation,— "I suppose you are aware that you are going among a set of people who, though decidedly the most interesting portion of the human race in the eyes of all true Christians, are nevertheless persons accustomed heretofore to habits of irregular, not to say licentious living . . . How do you think, ma'am, that you shall like to fall into habits of friendship and intimacy with such?"

Mr. O'Donagough listened with a good deal of anxiety for the answer: but it was a point on which he had given his affianced bride very ample instructions, and she did not disgrace her teacher.

"My notions upon that point, sir," she replied, "are rather particular, I believe; for so far from thinking the worse of my fellow-creatures because they have done wrong, I always think that is the very reason why I should seek their company, and exert myself in all ways to do them good, and to make them take their place among the first and greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

A murmur of applause ran round the little circle as Mrs. Barnaby concluded her speech, and Mr. Littleton, in particular, expressed his approbation of her sentiments in a manner that inspired the happy O'Donagough with the most sanguine hopes of success.

"I never heard better sense, or sounder principles, or more Christian feelings, in the whole course of my life, than what this lady has now expressed; and I will take upon me to say, gentlemen, without making any new difficulty about the matter, that any minister going out to Sydney in the holy and reverend character of a missionary, sent by an independent congregation of devotional men, with such a wife in his hand as this good lady will be sure to make, will do more good in his generation, than all the bishops and archbishops that ever were consecrated after the manner of the worn-out superstitions of by-gone ages. Gentlemen!" . . . he continued, rising from his chair, "I do, therefore, forthwith propose the immediate election of the Reverend Patrick O'Donagough to the office of missionary from the independent congregation of Anti-work Chris-

tians of London, to the independent congregation of Anti-work Christians at Sydney, with the privilege and undivided monopoly of tract and hymn selling to the said congregation, together with a patent right (not royal patent, my brethren, but holy patent,) to all fees, donations, contributions, and payments of whatsoever kind, made by the said independent congregation of Anti-work Christians at Sydney, for and on account of the salvation of their souls This, gentlemen, is the resolution I would propose, and I trust that some among you will readily be found to second it."

"That, sir, will I, and most joyfully," said Mr. Dellant, rising; "for I neither do nor can feel the shadow of a doubt, that our beneficent objects in despatching this mission will be more forwarded by this appointment than by any other, it is probable — gentlemen, I might say ~~possible~~ — we could make — for where, I would ask, shall we find another Mrs. Barnaby? May we not say, in the language of Scripture, that she is a help meet for him, even for the Reverend Patrick O'Donagough, whom we have chosen?"

Mr. Newbirth followed on the same side, giving many an answerable reason for believing that nothing which the stiff-necked, unconverted, obsolete ministers of the church of England could do for the predestined array of saints at present located at Sydney, could approach in utility and saving efficacy of absolving grace, to what might be hoped from the ministry of Mr. O'Donagough, assisted by the lady he was so happy as to have engaged to be his wife.

"It gives me the most heartfelt pleasure, gentlemen," he continued, "that my little humble drawing-room should have been made the scene of this happy election. How many souls, now most probably grovelling in the lowest depths of vice, will have places secured them upon the highest seats of heaven, by your work, gentlemen; begun, continued, and ended within this one propitious hour! I would now propose that we do all stand up, and sing a hymn to the glory of sinners made perfect Next, that we do all kneel down to hear and join in an awakening prayer from our new missionary; and, finally, that we walk into Mrs. Newbirth's back drawing-room, there to partake of such creature comforts as she in her care shall have provided."

This speech was also received with great applause. Some few pleasant and holy remarks and observations were made

by the other gentlemen present, and all things proceeded to the happy finale suggested by their host, in the most amicable and satisfactory manner, so that before Mr. O'Donoghue rose to escort Mrs. Barnaby to the coach which was to convey her to Half-Moon Street, he was given to understand, on the indefeasible authority of Mr. Littleton, that he might consider himself already as the anti-work missionary elect, and might set about the preparations for his marriage and subsequent departure without further uncertainty or delay.

* * * * *

Mrs. Barnaby's troubles now seemed really at an end; nothing could move onward with a smoother, surer pace, than did the business which she and her chosen companion had before them. The bridegroom's noble father became liberal and kind; under the certainty of his clever son's certain departure . . . The lawyers behaved exceedingly well about the settlements; influenced, perhaps, in some degree, by the wishes of the peer, who, as it seemed, was almost nervously anxious for the departure of the happy pair. . . . The dressmakers worked briskly, and a very respectable subscription was raised among the ladies of the independent congregation for the purchase of several elegant little presents for the bride, which they thought might prove useful during her voyage.

In this happy state we will leave our heroine, in order to see how matters were proceeding at Clifton.

CHAPTER XV.

AGNES GROWS MISERABLE. — AN EXPLANATORY CONVERSATION WITH COLONEL HUBERT LEAVES HER MORE IN THE DARK THAN EVER. — A LETTER ARRIVES FROM FREDERICK STEPHENSON.

At this period of their history the star of Agnes appeared much less propitious than that of her aunt Barnaby. Not all her inclination to construe every look and word of Colonel Hubert into something wiser and better, more noble and more kind than the looks and words of any other mortal man, could long prevent her from feeling that he was profoundly unhappy, and that, despite some occasional flashes of an emotion which *her own heart* taught her to know proceeded from love, he evidently avoided being with her as much as it was possible *for him to do* without attracting the attention of others.

Her aunt and his aunt went steadily on arranging between themselves a variety of preliminaries to the happy union they contemplated, while no hint that such an union was possible ever passed the lips of the intended bridegroom during any moment that circumstances placed him near his promised bride. More than once she saw him change colour when he approached her; and sometimes, but not often, she had caught his melancholy eyes fixed earnestly upon her, and it was at such moments that she felt persuaded he still loved her . . . but wherefore he, who had boldly wooed her when so many things conspired to make his doing it objectionable, should seem to shun her now that every thing was made so smooth and easy for him, she vainly laboured to understand.

"For time nor place," she exclaimed with something like bitterness, "did then adhere, and yet he would make both. . . ."

'They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Doth unmake him!''

By melancholy degrees every thing that had most contributed to her happiness, became her torment. The conversation of Miss Peters was inexpressibly irksome to her, particularly when they found themselves in confidential *tête-à-tête*, for then she could not help suspecting that her friend was longing to ask her some questions respecting the singularity of her lover's manner . . . the flattering notice of the well-pleased Lady Elizabeth, the sisterly affection manifested by the amiable Lady Stephenson, and, more than all the rest, the happy, bustling, business-like manner of her aunt Compton, who never for a moment seemed to forget that they were all preparing for a wedding.

So complete was this pre-occupation, that it was many days before the old lady perceived that her Agnes, in the midst of all this joyful preparation, looked neither well nor happy; nay, even when at last the sad eye and pale cheek of her darling attracted her attention, she persuaded herself for many days more that love-making was too sentimental a process to permit those engaged in it to be gay. She knew that the sighing of lovers was proverbial, and though she did not remember to have read any thing upon the subject exactly resembling what she remarked in Agnes, and, to say truth, in Colonel Hubert also, she did not, for she could not, doubt that every thing was going on just as it should do, though her

own want of practical experience rendered her incapable of fully understanding it.

But if Agnes was wretched, Colonel Hubert was infinitely more so; for all the misery that she darkly feared, without knowing either its nature or for how long it was likely to continue, came to him with the tremendous certainty of a misfortune that had already fallen upon him, and from which escape seemed less possible from day to day. She knew not what to think of him, and great, no doubt, was the unhappiness produced by such uncertainty; but greater still was the suffering produced by looking in her innocent face, and knowing, as well as Colonel Hubert did, why it grew daily paler. Not seldom, indeed, was he tortured by the apprehension that the line of conduct he had pursued, in recalling Frederick Stephenson, was by no means so unquestionably right in its self-sacrificing severity as he had intended it should be. Had he not endangered the tranquillity of Agnes, while guarding with jealous care his own proud sense of honour? If an unhappy concurrence of circumstances had involved him in difficulties that rendered his conduct liable to suspicion, ought he not to have endured the worst degree of contempt that this could bring upon him, rather than have suffered her peace to be the sacrifice?

Night and day these doubts tormented him. For hours he wandered through the roads on the opposite side of the river, where, comparatively speaking, he was sure no Clifton idlers could encounter him; and, reviewing his own conduct in a thousand ways, found none that would make him satisfied with himself. At length, in the mere restlessness of misery, he determined to tell Agnes all.

“She shall know his love — his generous uncalculating love, while I stood by, and reasoned on the inconvenience her aunt Barnaby’s vulgarity might bring. She shall know all though it will make her hate me!”

Such was the resolution with which he crossed the ferry after wandering a whole morning in Leigh Wood; and climbing the step-path too rapidly to give himself leisure to meditate temperately on the measure he had determined to pursue, he hurried forward to the dwelling of Miss Compton, and was already in her drawing-room before he had at all decided in what manner he should contrive to get Agnes alone.

In this, however, fortune favoured him ; for Miss Compton having some point on which she desired to communicate with Lady Elizabeth, had ordered the carriage, and invited Agnes to pay a visit to Lady Stephenson ; but the poor girl had no heart to sustain a conversation with a friend from whom she most earnestly desired to conceal all her thoughts — so she declined the invitation, alleging her wish to write a letter to Empton.

As much alone, and, if possible, more melancholy still, than when, a few short weeks before, he made his memorable visit in Half-Moon Street, Colonel Hubert found Agnes listlessly lying upon a sofa ; her eyes closed, but their lashes too recently wetted by tears to make him fancy her asleep. She was in an inner room, to which he entered through the open door that led from the larger drawing-room, and he was close beside her before she was aware of his approach.

It was with a dreadful pang that he contemplated the change anxiety had wrought on her delicate features since the evening she first appeared to him in all the bright light-hearted joy of her new happiness under the protection of her aunt. Love, honour, gratitude, tenderness, and remorse all rushed to his bosom, and so completely overpowered the philosophy by which he had hitherto restrained his feelings, that he dropped on his knees beside her, and, seizing the hand that languidly hung by her side, covered it with passionate kisses.

An iron chain is not a stronger restraint than timid delicacy to such a nature as that of Agnes ; and therefore she did not throw herself on the bosom of Colonel Hubert, and thus obliterate by one moment of unrestrained feeling all the doubts and fears that had so long tormented them both . . . she only opened her beautiful eyes upon him, which seemed to say, "Is then the dark cloud past that has divided us ? . . . Hubert! may I be happy again ?"

The unhappy Hubert, however, dared not answer this appeal, though he read it, and felt it at the very bottom of his heart ; and what under happier circumstances would have tempted him to kneel beside her for ever, now made him spring to his feet as if terrified at the danger that he ran.

"Agnes !" he said, "you must no longer be left ignorant of my misery . . . you may, you must, have seen something of it, but not all . . . you have not seen, you have not guessed

what the struggle has been between a passion as fervent as ever warmed the heart of man and a sense of honour . . . too late awakened perhaps . . . which has made it a duty to suspend all pleadings for an avowed return till . . . till . . .”

“ Till !” . . . repeated Agnes, agitated, but full of hope that the moment was indeed come when the dark and mysterious cloud which had dimmed all her prospects should be dispelled.

“ Hear my confession, Agnes, and pity me at least, if you find it impossible to excuse me . . . Do you remember the first time that I ever saw you ? . . . It was at a shop at Clifton.”

Agnes bowed.

“ Do you remember the friend who was with me ?”

Agnes bowed again, and this time she coloured too. Colonel Hubert sighed profoundly, but presently went on with the confession he had braced his nerves to make.

“ That friend, Agnes, the generous noble-hearted Frederick Stephenson, saw, even in that brief interview, the beauty, the grace, the delicacy which it took me days to develop . . . in short, he loved you, Agnes, before, almost before I had ever looked at you . . . I was his dearest friend. He hid no thought from me, and with all the frankness of his delightful character he confessed his honourable attachment . . . And how was it, think you, that I answered him ?”

Agnes raised her eyes to his face with a very anxious look, but spoke not a word ; and Colonel Hubert, with a heightened colour that mounted to his temples, went on.

“ I told him, Miss Willoughby, that a young lady chaperoned by a person with the manners and appearance of your aunt Barnaby was not a fitting wife for him . . .”

The eyes of Agnes fell, and her cheeks too were now dyed with crimson. Colonel Hubert saw it, and felt it all, but he went on.

“ The subject was repeatedly revived between us, and as his attachment increased, so did also my opposition to it. I placed before him, in the strongest manner I was capable of doing, all the objections to the connection as they then appeared to me ; and I did it, as I thought, purely from a sense of duty to himself and his family, which had recently become so closely connected with my own. But, alas ! Agnes . . . my peace has been and is destroyed by the dreadful doubt whether some

selfish feelings, unknown to myself, might not at length have mingled with these strong remonstrances. Knowing as I do the character of Sir Edward and his two sisters, no remorse was awakened in my mind so long as you remained with Mrs. Barnaby . . . and the last time I conversed with my poor friend, I used language so strong upon the subject that he left me in great anger. But it appears that, notwithstanding his just resentment, these remonstrances had weight; for he immediately left the kingdom, and has, I believe, remained in Paris ever since. Think then, Miss Willoughby . . . judge for me if you can, with what feelings I contemplate the unlooked-for change in your position . . . Oh! Agnes . . . would that your excellent Miss Compton had preserved her coldness to you till you had been my wife . . . Even then, I might have felt a pang for Stephenson; but the knowledge that his friends would not, like mine, have forgotten Mrs. Barnaby in their admiration for her niece, would have furnished a justification of the events which followed his departure too reasonable to be set aside. But what must I feel now when I think of the banished Frederick? . . . Banished by me, that I might take his place."

* * * * *

Excepting to Mary Peters, who had been aware of the attachment of Frederick Stephenson long before herself, Agnes had never breathed a hint to any human being of the proposal she had received from him, and it had not most assuredly been her intention ever to have named it to Colonel Hubert. She had, indeed, but rarely remembered it herself, and hoped and believed that, before they met again, the gay young man would have quite forgotten it; but now she could preserve his secret no longer, and, eager to speak what she thought would entirely relieve his self-reproaches to hear, she said, with glowing cheeks and an averted eye,—

"Let me, then, confess to you, Colonel Hubert . . ."

These unlucky words, however, intended as a preface to the only intelligence that could effectually have soothed his agitation, unfortunately increased it tenfold; and raising his hand to arrest what she was about to say, he replied with an impetuosity with which she could not at that moment contend—
 "Confess nothing, Miss Willoughby, to me . . . I see that I have awakened feelings which I ought to have foreseen would inevitably be called into existence by such a disclosure. . .

Suffer me to say a few words more, and I have done A week ago, I did what I ought to have done, as soon as your present position was known to me I wrote to Mr. Stephenson, and told him that every obstacle was removed and that”

“You wrote to him, Colonel Hubert!” exclaimed Agnes, greatly disturbed “Oh! why did you not tell me all this before?”

“It is not yet too late, Miss Willoughby,” he replied, bitterly; “another letter shall follow my first more explicit, more strongly urging his return.”

“But you will not hear me, Colonel Hubert,” said Agnes, bursting into tears. “Have patience for a moment, and you will understand it all.”

At this moment a carriage stopped at the door, and the knocker and the bell together gave notice of Miss Compton’s return.

“It is my aunt!” cried Agnes. “Indeed she must not see me thus; for how could I explain to her what must appear so strange as her finding me in tears, and you beside me. Let me see you again, Colonel Hubert — I pray you to let me see you again, when I may be able to speak to you but now I must go;” and so saying she escaped from the room just in time to avoid meeting Miss Compton at the door.

From a very early period of their short acquaintance, Miss Compton had made up her mind to consider Colonel Hubert as a very superior personage, but of a remarkably grave and silent character; so much so, indeed, that while she admired and approved her Agnes the more for loving and being loved by so dignified an individual, she could not help wondering a little occasionally that so it should be. But this feeling she carefully concealed, and made it a point, whenever a shade of gravity more profound than usual was perceptible on his features (a circumstance not unfrequent), to avoid interfering with his reserve by any loquacious civility. This line of conduct had often been a great relief to him, but never more so than on the present occasion, when, if any lengthened greetings had occurred to stop his retreat, it would have been impossible for him to have preserved the outward semblance of cold composure in which he had hitherto found shelter from observation.

“You are going, Colonel Hubert?” she said. “Well, I

will not detain you, for I am going to be busy myself — good morning." And so he escaped.

On reaching home, he found a letter waiting for him, which by no means tended to calm his spirits. It was from Frederick Stephenson, and ran thus —

"MY DEAR HUBERT,

"Your letter puzzles me; but not many hours after this reaches you, I hope we shall mutually understand each other better than we do at present. I am on my road to England; and as all explanation must be impossible till we meet, I will only add that I am yours ever,

"FREDERICK STEPHENSON."

* * * * *

A few hours, then, and all doubt, all uncertainty would be over! A full explanation must take place; and rather than endure a continuance of what he had lately suffered, Colonel Hubert felt inclined to welcome the result, be it what it might.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DISCOVERY SCENE — PRODUCTIVE OF MANY NEW RELATIONS, AND VARIOUS OTHER CONSEQUENCES.

THE day next but one after this letter reached him, Miss Compton and Agnes were engaged to dine with Lady Elizabeth. Colonel Hubert had not ventured to present himself in the Mall during the interval; for though, on cooler meditation, he did not believe that the unfortunate words, "Let me, then, confess to you, Colonel Hubert," were meant to usher a confession of love to his rival, he doubted not that they would have been followed by an avowal of her agreeing with himself in deeming his own conduct most reprehensible; and just then he felt he could not receive this, notwithstanding its justice, in such a manner as to assist in obtaining pardon for the fault. To Sir Edward he had mentioned the probability of his brother's early return, but without hinting at the chance of their seeing him at Clifton on his arrival in England.

The ladies of the party, — namely, Lady Elizabeth, Lady

Stephenson, Miss Compton, and Agnes, — were assembled in the drawing-room, the two gentlemen not having yet quitted the dining-parlour, when a knock at the door announced company.

“ Who can that be ? ” said Lady Stephenson. “ Have you invited evening company ? ”

“ Not a soul, my dear,” replied her aunt ; “ I mean to have a treat again I think I am growing sick of curiosities.”

“ *Tant mieux*, dear aunt ! ” replied Lady Stephenson. “ But, invited or not, you have visitors coming now : I hear them on the stairs.”

Lady Stephenson was right ; the old butler opened the drawing-room door almost as she spoke, and announced “ Mr. Stephenson ! ”

“ Frederick ! ” exclaimed his fair sister-in-law, looking as if she meant to receive him very kindly.

“ Young Stephenson ! ” said Lady Elizabeth ; “ I did not know that he was coming to Clifton.”

“ Sir Edward’s brother, I suppose ? ” said Miss Compton ; but Agnes said nothing, though, had any one laid a hand upon her heart, they would have discovered that his arrival was not a matter of indifference. To receive him with the appearance of it was, however, absolutely necessary, and she very resolutely assumed an aspect of tranquillity. It was not necessary that she should look towards the door to greet him as he entered, and therefore she did not do it ; but, notwithstanding the attention she devoted to the pattern of the hearth-rug, she became aware, within a moment after this electrifying name had been announced, that not one only, but three people were in the room, and that one of them was a lady.

Agnes then looked up, and the first figure which distinctly met her eye was not that of Frederick Stephenson, but of a gentleman bearing the stamp of some forty years, perhaps, upon his handsome but delicate features. He was not tall, but slightly and elegantly formed, which was perceptible, though wrapped in a travelling frock trimmed with fur, and his whole appearance was decidedly that of a gentleman.

But who these might be who were with him, or how they were received by Lady Elizabeth, the eye of Agnes had no power to inquire ; for it was fascinated, as it were, by the

earnest gaze of this stranger, who, having already stepped forward a pace or two nearer to her than the rest, stood looking at her with very evident emotion.

The first words she heard spoken were in the voice of young Stephenson, which she immediately recognised, though the purport of them was unintelligible.

"Yes, my dear sir, you are quite right," he said; "that is our Agnes."

But though these words were somewhat startling, they drew her attention less than the expression of the large blue eyes that were fixed upon her; there were admiration, tenderness, and a strange sort of embarrassment, all legibly mingled in that earnest look but why was it fixed on her?

What effect this mute scene produced on the other persons present Agnes could not know; for she did not withdraw her eyes from those of the mysterious stranger, till at length he turned from her, and, stepping back, took the hand of a very young, but very beautiful girl, whom he led towards the sofa she occupied, and, placing her on it, said,—

"Agnes Willoughby! receive your sister and let her plead for her father and yours You have been long, long neglected, my poor child; but there has been some excuse for it. . . . Can you forgive me, Agnes?"

"Good God! My father!" she exclaimed, starting up, and stretching out her hands towards him. "Is it possible, sir, that you are indeed my father?"

"You speak as if you wished it were so, Agnes," he replied, taking her in his arms, and impressing a kiss upon her forehead, "and I will echo your words Is it possible?"

"Possible! O! yes, sir, it is possible. . . . I have so longed to know that I had a father And is this sweet creature my sister?" she continued, turning her tearful eyes upon the beautiful girl, who upon this appeal sprang forward, and enclosing both her father and Agnes in her arms, replied to it by saying,—

"Yes, dearest Agnes, I am your sister, indeed I am; and I know you very well, and all about you, though you know so little about me but you will not refuse to own me, will you?"
 For all reply Agnes bent forward and kissed her fondly.
 Miss Compton, who, as may be supposed, had watched this

discovery scene with no little interest, now stepped towards them, while young Stephenson was engaged in explaining it to Lady Elizabeth and his sister-in-law; and looking from one sister to the other, and from them both to their father, she said — “ You will, perhaps, hardly remember that we ever met, Mr. Willoughby . . . but my name is Compton, and I recal your features perfectly. You once passed an hour at my brother’s house when I was there . . . and that these girls are sisters, no one who sees them together will be likely to deny. . . . God bless them both, pretty creatures ! . . . I hope they will each be a blessing to the other . . . But, to be sure, it seems to be a most romantic story . . . and wonderfully like those I used to read in my bower, Agnes.”

“ There is a good deal that is very sad in my part of it, Miss Compton,” replied Mr. Willoughby; “ but at this moment I can hardly regret it, as herein I hope to show some excuse for my long negligence respecting my poor girl. Take this on trust, my good lady, will you,” he added, holding out his hand to her, “ that no displeasure towards me may destroy the happiness of this meeting ? ”

Miss Compton gave him her hand very frankly, saying,—

“ I have no right to be very severe upon you, Mr. Willoughby; for, without any misfortunes at all to plead as an excuse for it, our dear Agnes might tell you some naughty stories about me . . . But she does not look as if she were much inclined to complain of any body . . . What a pair of happy, lovely-looking creatures ! . . . And how very strong the likeness to each other, and of both to you ! ”

Willoughby retired a step or two, and, leaning against the chimney-piece, seemed disposed to enjoy the contemplation of the picture she pointed out in silence. Lady Elizabeth claimed the attention of Miss Compton, that she might express her interest, satisfaction, surprise, and so forth. Lady Stephenson slipped out of the room to communicate the news to her husband and brother, and prepare them for the company they had to receive . . . and then Frederick Stephenson approached the sisters, and drawing a chair towards them, very freely took a hand of each.

That of Agnes trembled. She felt that the happiness of her *life would be for ever destroyed if this young man was come back in consequence of Colonel Hubert’s letter, with the persuasion that it was her purpose to accept him : and favourable*

as was the moment for a sort of universal philanthropy and unrestrained *épanchement de cœur*, she could not resist the impulse which led her to withdraw her hand, and return his affectionate smile with a look of coldness and reserve.

Perfectly undaunted, however, the gay Frederick continues to look at her with an air of the most happy confidence; but suddenly, as it seemed, recollecting that it was possible, though they had all of them been at least ten minutes in the room together, no explanation might have yet reached her, he said, in a manner to show that he was too happy to be very grave, though quite sufficiently in earnest to deserve belief—"If you accept my Nora for a sister, Agnes, you must accept me for a brother too. She knows that till I saw her I thought you the most charming person in the world; and as she forgives me for this, I hope you will show as much reasonableness to her in mind as in person, and forgive me for thinking, when I did see her, that she was still more charming than you?"

And then it was that Agnes for the first time in her life felt wholly, perfectly, and altogether happy. She saw in an instant, with the rapid glance of love, that all the misty cloud that had hung between her and Hubert was withdrawn for ever . . . and then she felt how very delightful it was to have a father, and such an elegant, interesting-looking father . . . and then she became fully aware what a blessing it was to have a sister, and that sister so beautiful, and so capable of inspiring love in every heart . . . save one, guarded as Hubert's was guarded. Her joy, her new-born gladness of spirit, danced in her eyes, as she now freely returned the young man's laughing glance, and, restoring to him the hand she had withdrawn, she exclaimed, "Oh! Frederick . . . why did you not answer Hubert's letter, and tell him this?"

"It is so, then? . . . it is as I hoped, my sweet Agnes? . . . and you will be doubly our sister? . . . Why did I not answer Hubert's letter? Because it was the most mysterious, unintelligible, dark, and diplomatic performance that ever was put forth. Did you see it, Agnes?"

"No, I did not," she replied, with a smile; "but I can imagine that it might have been a little in that style. Yet still you should have answered it."

"I did answer it—that is, I replied to it by a line or two written in a prodigious hurry; but you must perceive that I

could not enclose Nora in a cover ; and as she is, to all intents and purposes, *my answer*, I was obliged to let him wait till I could convey her properly, and place her before his eyes and his understanding."

"And so convince him," replied Agnes, with another smile, full of her new-born gaiety, "that the moment she is seen all other ladies must be forgotten, . . . prove that to Colonel Hubert, Mr. Stephenson, and I will prove to you . . ."

"What? — you tremendous-looking sibyl! what?"

"A very fatal sister!" she replied; and then the door opened, and Lady Stephenson preceded the two gentlemen she had brought from the dining-parlour into the room.

Agnes, no longer the fearful, shrinking Agnes, sprang forward to meet them, and taking Colonel Hubert by the hand, led him to her father, saying, in an altered accent, that at once entered his heart, and told him that all was right, "Let me present you to my father, Hubert — to my *dear* father, Colonel Hubert. He will indeed be doubly dear to us; for he has brought with him a sister for both of us, whom I feel sure we shall for ever love."

But hardly did Agnes, who seemed newly awakened from some heavy spell that had benumbed her heart — hardly did she give time for a courteous greeting between the gentlemen, ere she passed her arm beneath that of Colonel Hubert, and led him to the sofa. Frederick started forward to meet him, and laying a hand on each shoulder, said in his ear, yet not so low but that Agnes heard him too — "It was lucky I did not take you to France with me, Hubert, or I should certainly never have got a wife at all; as it is, however, permit me" — he added aloud — "to present you, Colonel Hubert, to Miss Nora Willoughby. Nora, dearest, this gentleman is the best friend I have in the world — my brother's wife is his sister; and your sister, my fair bride elect, will very soon be his wife, or I cannot read the stars . . . so, as you may perceive, our catastrophe is exceedingly like that great model of all catastrophes, in which the happy hero says . . . 'And these are all my near relations — *ecco signum*, here is my own elder brother . . . Sir Edward Stephenson, Miss Nora Willoughby. Is she not charming, Edward? I hope I have pleased you at last, and their ladyships, my sisters, too; for I assure you every thing is very elegant, well-born, and so forth. . . . But you are not to sit down by her though, for all that, unless you make

room for me between you, for she has already given away more smiles than I can at all afford to spare; and, besides, I have a hundred things to say to her. . . . I want to ask her how she likes you all."

Colonel Hubert, as soon as his gay friend had rescued himself, gave one speaking look to Agnes, and then devoted himself entirely to Mr. Willoughby.

By degrees the party began to talk together with less of agitation and more of comfort; but Frederick was not permitted wholly to engross his young *fiancée*, for all the ladies crowded round her, and vied with each other in giving a cordial welcome to this young foreigner on the land of her father. She was in truth a very sweet young creature, and soon converted the kindness which circumstances called for into very cordial liking. Distant hopes were talked of without reserve, and immediate arrangements canvassed. Miss Compton kindly invited the young stranger to share her sister's apartment, a servant was despatched to secure rooms for Mr. Willoughby and Frederick at the hotel, and the happiness their unexpected arrival had brought to two harassed hearts of the party seemed to diffuse itself very delightfully among them all.

At length Miss Compton's carriage was announced; and while the cloaks of the fair sisters were wrapped round them by their vowed servants, Mr. Willoughby performed the same office for her, and took that opportunity of asking leave to wait upon her on the following morning, in order to relate to her such passages of the history of his long exile as might, in some degree, account for his having left her adopted child for so many years without a father.

While this appointment was making with the aunt, the niece contrived, unheard by all, to whisper a word or two which led to an appointment for her also.

Colonel Hubert had more than once that evening taught her to understand, by the eloquence of looks, the delightful change that had been wrought within him; but it was Agnes who first found the opportunity of giving expression to it in words. He stood behind her as he arranged her cloak; and when this was done, she turned suddenly round to him, and said, in an *accent of playful reproach*, "Hubert! . . . may I be happy now?"

His answer was, "Will you see me to-morrow? . . . and alone?" She blushed — perhaps at remembering how often

she had before wished to converse with him in the manner he now for the first time proposed, but she nodded her assent; he handed her to the carriage, pressed her hand, and whispered "eleven o'clock" as he put her into it, and then mounted to his chamber without exchanging a word more with any living soul, that he might enjoy, for the first time since he had yielded up his heart, the luxury of meditating on Agnes and her promised love, without any mixture of self-reproach to poison the enjoyment.

CHAPTER XVII.

GREAT CONTENTMENT.

HAD not Nora Willoughby been an interesting and amiable creature, her introduction at this moment to all the freedom of a sister's rights would certainly have been less agreeable than surprising to Agnes; and perhaps, notwithstanding the sweet expression of her lovely face, the pretty tenderness of her manner, and the lively interest which one so near in blood could not fail to awaken, Agnes, as she entered her bed-room on that eventful night, would rather have entered it alone. Her heart seemed too full to permit her conversing freely with any one; and it was by an effort, not made altogether without pain, that she turned her thoughts from Hubert, and all that vast world of happiness which appeared opening before them, to welcome her fair sister to her bower, and to begin such a conversation with her as sisters so placed might be expected to hold. But she was soon rewarded for the exertion, for it was quite impossible to pass an hour of intimate intercourse with Nora without loving her; for she was made up of frankness, warm affection, light-heartedness, and sweet temper.

As soon as Peggy had performed all the services required of her, and that the door was fairly closed behind her, Nora threw her arms round the neck of Agnes, and pressed her in a long and fond embrace.

"Dear, dear Agnes!" she exclaimed, "I wish you could share the pleasure that I enjoy at this moment—but it is impossible. . . . I come upon you suddenly, unexpectedly, unintelligibly, and must rather startle and astound than give

you the delight that you give me. For I have been preparing to love you for many weeks past, and have been longing till I was almost sick to get to you. And after such eager and sanguine expectations as mine, it is so delightful to find oneself not disappointed!"

"And is such the case with my sweet sister?" replied Agnes, caressingly.

"Indeed, indeed it is!—Frederick told me you were very beautiful—but I did not expect to find you half so . . . so elegant, so finished, so every way superior."

"I shall quarrel with you, Nora, if you say such very fine things to me. . . . Perhaps I think you very pretty, too, dear; but if I do, I must not say so, because they tell us that we are so much alike it would be like admiring myself."

"Well! . . . and you cannot help admiring yourself, it is impossible. . . . But, sister Agnes, what a blessing it was that you did not happen to fall in love with Frederick! What would have become of me if you had? . . . for, do you know, I loved almost as soon as I saw him. It was all so odd. It was at the Italian opera that we first met; and I could not help observing that the handsomest man I had ever seen was looking at me almost incessantly. Papa never saw a bit about it, for when he is listening to music he never cares for any thing. However, I do assure you, I tried to behave properly; though, if I had done quite the contrary, papa would never have found it out. I never looked at him at all above three or four times, and that was accidentally from happening to turn round my head. But whether I thought about it or not, there were his beautiful large eyes always sure to be fixed upon me; and when the opera was over, he must have run out of his box the moment we left ours, for I saw him as we got into the *fiacre* standing close beside it. Well, I hardly know how it happened, but from that time I never stirred out without meeting him; he never spoke, of course, but that did not prevent our knowing one another just as well as if we had been the oldest acquaintance. At last, however, he managed very cleverly to find out that papa was acquainted with M. Dupont, who gives such beautiful concerts, and receives all the English so hospitably, and he asked as a great favour to be invited to meet us; and so he was; and then we were introduced, and then every thing went on beautifully; for he knew you, and the name of Willoughby, and the likeness, and all that, and

vinced him that we must be the same family; so he and papa very soon made it all out, and then he came to call upon us every day; and very, very, very soon afterwards, I was engaged to be his wife as soon as possible, after we all got back to England."

"Thank you, dearest Nora!" replied Agnes, who, notwithstanding all her pre-occupation, had found no difficulty in listening very attentively to this narrative; "I cannot tell you all the pleasure your little history has given me. . . . There is nobody in the world I should like so well for a brother as Frederick Stephenson, and there is nobody in the world I should like so well for a sister as Frederick Stephenson's wife."

"That is delightful!" cried Nora, joyfully; "and we certainly are two of the luckiest girls in the world to have every thing just as we would wish. . . . But, Agnes, there is one thing I shall never understand. . . . How could you help falling in love with Frederick when he fell in love with you?"

"Because I happened just then," replied Agnes, laughing, "to be falling in love with some one else."

"Well! certainly that was the most fortunate thing in the world. . . . and Frederick himself thinks so now. He told me that he had a great mind to shoot himself when you refused him; but that the very first moment he saw me, he felt certain that I should suit him a great deal better than you would have done."

"That I am sure is quite true, Nora," replied Agnes, very earnestly; "for I too feel certain that I never could have suited any body but Colonel Hubert. . . . And now, my sweet sister, let us go to sleep, or we shall hardly be up early enough to meet the friends who, I think, will be wishing to see us again. . . . Good night, dearest!"

"Good night, darling Agnes! . . . Is not it pleasant to have a sister, Agnes? . . . It is so nice to be able to tell you every thing. . . . I am sure I could never be able to do it to any body else. Good night!"

"Bless you, sweet Nora!" replied Agnes; and then each nestling upon her pillow, and giving some few happy dreamy thoughts to the object they loved best, they closed their fair young eyes, and slept till morning.

* * * * *

The waking was to both of them, perhaps, somewhat like the continuance of a dream; but Peggy came, and threw the

light of day upon them, while each fair girl seemed to look at her own picture as she contemplated her pretty bedfellow, and appeared to be exceedingly well pleased by the survey.

It was already late ; and Agnes, rapidly as she was learning to love her companion, did not linger at her toilet, but leaving Nora, with a hasty kiss, to the care of Peggy, she hastened to the breakfast table, and made aunt Betsy's heart glad by telling her at last that she expected Colonel Hubert would call about eleven o'clock, and that if she did not think it wrong she should like to speak to him for a few minutes alone.

"Wrong, my child!" exclaimed Miss Compton; "why, I never in my life read a work painting the manners of the age in which I did not find interviews, sometimes occurring three or four times in a day, entirely *l'ête-à-l'ête*, between the parties."

"Then I may go into the back drawing-room presently . . . may I, aunt Betsy? . . . And perhaps you would tell William . . ."

"Yes, yes, my dear, I'll tell him every thing . . . But eat some breakfast, Agnes, or I am sure you will not be able to talk . . . I suppose it is about your new sister, and your father, and all that, that you want to speak to him."

"There are many things, aunt Betsy . . . But, good heavens! there is a knock . . . Will it not look very odd for you to send him in to me?"

Without waiting to give an answer, the agile old lady intercepted William's approach to the door in time to give the order she wished; and in two minutes more Colonel Hubert was ushered into a room where the happy but blushing Agnes was alone.

His first few steps towards her were made at the pace at which drawing-room floors are usually traversed, but the last part of the distance was cleared by a movement considerably more rapid; for she had risen in nervous agitation as he approached, and for the first time that he had ever ventured a caress he threw his arms around her, and pressed her to his heart. Agnes struggled not to disengage herself, but wept *without restraint* upon his bosom.

"You do then love me, Agnes? . . . At last, at last our hearts have met, and never can be severed more! But still you must tell me very often that you have forgiven me, dear-

est, for is it not difficult to believe? And does it not require frequent vouching?"

"What is it, Montague, that you would have forgiven?" said Agnes, looking up at him, and smiling through her tears.

This was the first time that her lips had pronounced his Christian name to any ears but her own, and she blushed as she uttered it.

"Agnes! my own Agnes!" he exclaimed, "you have forgiven me, or you would not call me Montague! . . . How is it possible," he continued, looking fondly at her, "that a word so hackneyed and familiar from infancy as our own name can be made to thrill through the whole frame like a touch of electricity?"

He drew her to the sofa from which she had risen, and placing himself by her, said, "Now, then, Agnes, let us sit down soberly together, and take an unvarnished retrospect of all that has passed since we first met . . . Yet why should I ask for this? . . . I hate to think of it . . . for it is a fact, Agnes, which his subsequent attachment to your sister must not make you doubt, Frederick and his seven thousand a year would have been at your disposal, had not my dissuasions prevented it. . . And had this been so, who knows . . ."

A shade of melancholy seemed once again settling on the noble countenance of Colonel Hubert; Agnes could not bear it, and looking earnestly at him, she said,—

"Montague! answer me sincerely this one question, which is the strongest feeling in your mind at this moment—the pleasure derived from believing that your influence on Frederick was so great, or the pain of doubting how the offer you speak of would have been received?"

"I have no pleasure in believing I have influence on any one, save yourself," he answered gravely.

"I am glad of that, Montague," she said, "because you somewhat over-rated your influence with my brother elect. Save for your foolish doubts, infidel! . . . you never should have known it, but . . . Frederick Stephenson did propose to me, Hubert, before he went abroad."

"And you refused him, Agnes!"

"And I refused him, Hubert."

"Oh! had I known this earlier, what misery should I have been spared!" cried Colonel Hubert. "You know not—"

you could not know all I have suffered, Agnes yet surely, dearest! when last we spoke together, it was but yesterday, in this very room, you must then have guessed the cause of the dreadful restraint that kept us asunder."

"There was no need of guessing then," replied Agnes smiling, "for you told me so distinctly."

"Then why not on the instant remove the load from my heart? were you quite incapable of feeling how galling it must have been to me?"

"I'll tell you how that came to pass," said Agnes, rising. . . . "Do you sit still there, as I did yesterday, and say, 'Let me then confess to you, Colonel Hubert,' and then I will answer thus," and raising her hand, as if to stop his speech, she added, mimicking his impatient tone, —

"'Confess nothing, Miss Willoughby, to me!' And then you told me you had written to him, and when I exclaimed, with some degree of dismay at the idea of your having written to recall him, you again interrupted me by saying that you would do it again and then my aunt came, and so we parted. . . . Then whose fault was it that I did not tell you?"

"My own, Agnes, it was my own; and, alas! I did not suffer for it alone. . . . How wretched you must have been made by my vehemence! But you have forgiven me, and all this must be forgotten for ever. . . . There is, however, one subject on which I would willingly ask a few more questions — these I hope you will answer, Agnes?"

"Yes!" she replied, gaily, "you may hope for an answer to all your questions provided, that just when I am about to speak, you do not raise your arm *thus*, in order to prevent me."

"I will do my utmost to avoid it," he replied, "and for the greater security will place the offending arm *thus*" throwing it round her; "and now tell me, Agnes, why it was that you would not accept Frederick Stephenson?"

"And will you be pleased to tell me, Colonel Hubert, why it was that you did not propose to to any body else but me?"

"Because I loved you, and you only."

"Because I loved you, and you only," repeated Agnes.

"Is that an echo?" said Colonel Hubert.

"No!" replied Agnes . . . "it is only the answer to your question."

"Then, exactly when I was occupied in finding reasons incontrovertible why the niece of Mrs. Barnaby should never be loved by mortal man, the young, the lovely Agnes Willoughby was loving me?"

"Even so," said Agnes, somewhat mournfully; "false impressions have worked us so much woe, that it would not be wise to let a little feminine punctilio prevent you seeing things as they are. . . Yet it is hardly fair, Hubert, to make me tell you this." . . .

"Oh, say not so!" he replied; "mistake not the source of this questioning; for, Agnes, be secure

* That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world,
Would not offend thee!

But can you wonder that, after all I have suffered, my heart and soul thirsts for an assurance of your love? What might well suffice another, Agnes, ought not to suffice me . . . I am so much older."

"I cannot help it, Montague . . . nor could I help it when you took me out of the clutches of Major Allen, upon the Windmill Hill, nor when you pleased to be so gracious as to approve my singing . . . nor upon a great many other occasions, when it would have been wise for me to remember it, perhaps. But if I love you and you love me, I cannot see how your age or mine either need interfere to prevent it."

Perhaps at last Colonel Hubert arrived at the same satisfactory conclusion, for the conversation was a long one; and before it was ended, some little sketchings of his feelings during the early part of their acquaintance brought to Agnes's mind the soothing belief, that after the evening of the Clifton ball her image had never forsaken his fancy more, though it was by slow degrees that it had grown into what he called such "terrible strength" there, as to conquer every other feeling.

Agnes listened to him as he stated this with most humble-minded and unfeigned astonishment, but also with most willing belief, and then, following his example she quoted Shakspeare, exclaiming, —

*"And if an angel should have come to me
And told me thus,
I would have believed no tongue but Hubert's."*

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION.

Mr. WILLOUGHBY was little less punctual to his appointment than Colonel Hubert ; and as the young Nora, weary with her journey, and exhausted from the excitement of the scenes which followed it, had not yet left her bed, he too, had the advantage of a *tête-à-tête*.

It is needless to enter upon any minute repetition of a narrative which had, in fact, little or no connection with the personages of our drama. It was evident that Mr. Willoughby had suffered much, both from the early loss of his fair young wife, and the continued hostility, or, more properly speaking, the continued neglect of his family. He had exchanged into a regiment sent on a dangerous and disagreeable service, and with broken spirits and failing health, might very likely have perished before it was ended, had not his "good gifts" very suddenly made captive the affections of a young girl almost as pretty as poor Sophia Compton, and quite as rich as she was the contrary.

This marriage converted him into the only son and heir of a wealthy merchant ; all his new family required of him, in exchange for their daughter and their wealth, was, that he should live amongst them. This he consented to do, but his life was not a happy one. With the prospect of great possessions before him, he was kept in almost penniless dependence upon his father-in-law ; all his wants, indeed, profusely supplied, but with no more power to assist in the maintenance of the child he had left in England than if he had been a slave chained to the oar.

For sixteen years he had led this painful life of penniless splendour, in the course of which he was again left a widower with one little girl ; but though his existence in his father-in-law's family had lost its only charm by this event, he was prevented from making any effort to change it, as much by his total inability to support himself elsewhere, as by consideration for the interest of his child. As she grew up, he began once more to feel that life was not altogether a bore and a burden, and at length his passive submission to years of wearying annoyance was rewarded by finding himself, at the death of the

generous but tyrannical Mr. Grafton, the possessor of a handsome life income, and the sole guardian of the young heiress his daughter.

It was then that, for the first time, he felt disposed to recall himself to the memory of those he had left behind him in England; and the desire to do so became so strong, that he lost no time in finally arranging his affairs in the country of his exile, and taking his departure for Europe. For the sake of having a friend as commander of the ship in which he sailed, he took his passage for Havre, and, once landed on the coast of France, he yielded to Nora's entreaties that they should pass a few weeks at Paris before they left it. His accidental meeting with Mr. Stephenson there was then related, and its consequences as it respected his daughter, and their journey home together, concluded his narration.

"Your romance, Mr. Willoughby," replied Miss Compton, "appears likely to come to a very happy conclusion . . . but I confess I wonder that never during your sixteen years of what appears to have been very perfect leisure you could never have found time to make any single inquiry about your little Agnes."

"And I wonder at it too, Miss Compton . . . but it is more easy to recall the feelings that led to this, than to explain them. I believe that the total impossibility of my transmitting any share of the wealth amidst which I lived to a child whom I had great reason to fear might want it, was the primary cause of it . . . and then came the hope that at no very distant day my inquiries for her might be made in a manner less torturing to my feelings than by acknowledging myself to be alive, in circumstances of high-fed pauperism, without the power of relieving any wants, however pressing, with which my inquiries might happen to make me acquainted. Had I known that you, Miss Compton, had adopted my little girl, I should not so long have suffered her to believe me dead, because I had not the power of making my being alive a source of joy to her."

Whether Miss Compton thought this apology a good one, or the reverse, does not appear; for all the branches of the party who so unexpectedly met together at the house of Lady Elizabeth Norris continued from that time forward to live on terms of the most agreeable amity together; and perhaps the

only symptom by which some little feeling of disapprobation might have been perceived, was Miss Compton's begging to decline, on the part of all interested, Mr. Willoughby's proposal of insuring his life for ten thousand pounds, as a portion for his eldest daughter.

"I do assure you sir, there is no occasion for it," said the little spinster, with great good-humour, but also with a very evident intention of having her own way "I believe that if you will mention the subject to Colonel Hubert, or to Lady Elizabeth Norris, his aunt, you will find that they both agree with me in thinking such a sacrifice of income on your part quite unnecessary, and decidedly unwise. Your sisters have not behaved to you kindly, but they have connected themselves well, and I believe we all think it would be more advantageous to both your daughters that their favour should be propitiated by your appearing before them in a style which may show you have no need of their assistance, than by any thing else you can do for them. The young ladies are both about to marry well, and with fortunes very fairly proportioned to those of their respective husbands, and any family coolness with such near relations as Lady Eastcombe and the honourable Mrs. Nivett would be both disadvantageous and disagreeable."

"My noble sisters will be vastly well disposed to welcome me now, Miss Compton, I have little doubt," replied Mr. Willoughby, with as much asperity as he was capable of feeling for any offence committed against him; "and I confess to you that the reconciliation would be particularly agreeable to me, from the power your generous adoption of my poor girl gives me now of proving to them that my marriage with Sophia Compton was not such a connection as to merit the severity with which they have treated it."

"I have no sort of objection to your proving this to them in any manner that you please," replied Miss Compton; "and I rather think the most effectual mode of doing so will be, by permitting the portion of Agnes to be furnished by Sophia Compton's aunt."

"Five thousand, then, let it be, Miss Compton; five thousand settled upon younger children," said Mr. Willoughby.

"No, sir," persisted the old lady, "it must not be, if you please. The property of Compton Basett, with the name, and a sum of money withal sufficient considerably to add to and

improve the estate, will be settled by me on the second son of your daughter Agnes, Lady Elizabeth, on the part of her nephew, adds ten thousand pounds to the settlement on younger children, which, together with my property, will of course belong to Agnes for her life. I hope, sir, this statement will satisfy you respecting the provision to be made for Miss Willoughby, and prevent your feeling any further anxiety on the subject."

It was impossible Mr. Willoughby could declare himself dissatisfied, and from this time he ventured no further allusion to the scheme of insuring his life.

* * * * *

Preparations for the two marriages now immediately began; and the interval necessary to the completion of settlements, and the building of carriages and dresses, was, at the earnest request of Agnes, to be spent at Clifton. She loved the place, for it was identified in her memory with the first sight of Hubert, and she often declared that there was no spot on the earth's surface she should ever love so well as that little esplanade behind the windmill on which Colonel Hubert first offered her his arm, without deeming it necessary to utter a word of explanation for doing so. The vicinity of Mary Peters, too, was another reason, and no trifling one, for this partiality; and as not one of the party had any point of re-union to plead for in preference, it was there that several weeks of present enjoyment and happy anticipation were passed.

* * * * *

It was about midway between the time at which every thing was settled between the lovers, their beloveds, and all parents, friends, and guardians interested therein, and the happy day on which the double espousals were celebrated, that Mr. and Mrs. Peters invited the whole party to dinner. No strangers were permitted to disturb the freedom of the society thus assembled at dinner, though, to gratify Lady Elizabeth's love of music, one or two proficient in that science were invited for the evening. The gentlemen, who probably thought the society in the drawing-room more agreeable than that of good Mr. Peters, even though backed by his excellent wine, were *already partaking coffee with the ladies, when a reduplicated knocking announced the arrival of visitors.*

"The Chamberlains, I suppose," said Mrs. Peters. "How very early they are!"

But she was mistaken, it was not the Chamberlains; for a footman threw wide the drawing-room door, and announced "Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough!"

"Mr. and Mrs. who?" said Mrs. Peters to Mary.

"Mr. and Mrs. what?" said Elizabeth to Lucy.

But before the parties thus questioned could have found time to answer, even had they been possessed of the information required, a lady in sober coloured silk, with little rouge and no ringlets, followed by a handsome young man in black, entered the room, and considerably before many who had seen that lady before could recall the name by which they had known her, or reconcile her much changed appearance to their puzzled recollections, Mrs. Peters was enfolded in her arms.

"My dear sister Peters!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, "you are surrounded by so large a party, that I fear these last moments which I meant to dedicate to the affection of my kinsfolk, may be more inconvenient than pleasurable to you. But you cannot, I am sure, refuse me some portion of your society this evening, as it is probably the last one we shall ever pass together. Give me leave, sister Peters, to introduce you to my husband, the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough. Mr. Peters, Mr. O'Donagough; Mr. James Peters, Mr. O'Donagough; Mr. O'Donagough, my dear Mary; my husband, young ladies; Mr. O'Donagough, my dear Elizabeth and Lucy! Good Heaven! Agnes here? and my aunt Compton, too! . . . Well, so much the better, my dear Patrick; I shall now have the pleasure of presenting you to more relations, and as I should be proud to introduce you to all the world, this can only be an increase of pleasure to me. Agnes Willoughby, my dear, I can't say you behaved very well to me when the cheerful sort of life I indulged in, solely on your account, was changed for sorrow and imprisonment; but, nevertheless, my religious principles, which are stronger, my dear, than even when you knew me, lead me to forgive you, and, better still, they lead me to introduce you to your excellent and exemplary uncle, the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough."

During the whole course of these speeches not a single voice had been heard to pronounce a syllable in reply, excepting that of Mr. Peters who put his heels together and made a bow

when she paused, husband in hand, before him, and said, "Your servant, sir!"

But Agnes, when her turn came, though colouring most painfully at being so addressed, and with her heart sinking under the unexampled annoyance of this intrusion, contrived to say, "I hope I see you well, aunt."

"Yes, Miss Agnes; well, and happy too, I promise you; and I wish you were likely to be as well settled, child, as I am. But I should like to know who it is has come forward with money to dress you up so? . . . You have not been singing on the stage, I hope? . . . Your uncle would be dreadfully shocked at such a thing; for he says that stage-plays are an abomination. . . . And upon my word, aunt Compton, you are grown mighty smart too in your old age. Mercy on me! . . . Vanity of vanities! . . . all is vanity!" . . . And then looking into the inner room, and perceiving that she had several more acquaintances there, she again took her husband by the hand and led him into it, presenting him to Lady Elizabeth, her niece, Colonel Hubert, and the two Stephensons. But when she came to Mr. Willoughby, who was standing with his youngest daughter at a window, she stopped, and looking at him very earnestly, seemed puzzled.

He bowed, though evidently without knowing her, and then, turning from her unpleasantly curious scrutiny, resumed his conversation with Nora.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mrs. O'Donagough . . . "but I should really be very much obliged if you would tell me your name."

"My name, madam, is Willoughby."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the bride, "O'Donagough, dearest, this is an eventful day, indeed. . . . Behold your brother!"

The two gentlemen stared at each other with an expression of countenance more indicative of surprise than of fraternal affection. . . . Mr. Willoughby, indeed, looked very much as if he suspected that the poor lady, be she who she would, was decidedly not in her right mind; while her husband, rather weary, perhaps, of such a continuity of introductions, escaped from her side, and stationed himself at another window.

"Willoughby! . . . dearest Willoughby! . . . Is it possible that you can have forgotten me? . . . Can you, indeed, have forgotten the sister of your wife?"

"Miss Martha? . . . Is it possible? . . . I beg your pardon, Mrs. O'Donagough . . . I certainly did not recollect you. I hope that I have the pleasure of seeing you well?"

"My dearest Willoughby! . . . You have no idea how exceedingly delighted I am to see you . . . What *has* become of you all this time? . . . I always supposed that you had been sold for a slave on the coast of Barbary . . . and I thank God, and my excellent husband . . . where is he? . . . I am sure the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough will thank God for your escape. . . . And who is that pretty young lady? . . . Dear me, she looks very much as if she was the daughter of your cruel master, and had fallen in love with you, and set you at liberty . . . Poor Sophy! . . . one could not expect you should remember her for ever . . . even I, you see, have forced myself to forget my poor dear Mr. Barnaby. . . . But now I think of it, you can't know any thing about Mr. Barnaby. . . . Do, my dear Willoughby, sit down with me on this sofa, and let us have a talk."

It was impossible for Mr. Willoughby to refuse, even had he wished it, which he really did not; and the perfect security of being welcome, which Mrs. O'Donagough displayed in her manner of establishing herself, in some sort obliged Mrs. Peters to act as if she were so . . . The different groups which had been deranged by her entrance resumed their conversation; coffee and tea included the intruders in its round, and every body excepting Miss Compton seemed once more tolerably at their ease. She could not affect to recover her equanimity like the rest, but placing a low chair immediately behind the sofa on which Lady Elizabeth's tall figure was placed, she sat down so as to be completely concealed by her, saying, "Will your ladyship have the great kindness to let me hide myself here? . . . That horrible woman is, I confess it, my own brother's daughter, but she is . . . no matter what she is . . . I am much to blame, no doubt, ! . . . but I hate to look upon her."

"Put yourself quite at your ease, Miss Compton," replied Lady Elizabeth, laughing; "I have not the least difficulty in the world in comprehending your feelings. In you she has conquered the feeling of relationship; in me, an instinct *stronger* still perhaps, namely, that of finding amusement in *absurdity*. But I almost think she has cured me of my *ménagerie* caprice for ever. Yet it is difficult, too, not to enjoy

the spectacle she offers with her young husband in her hand. But I don't mean to lose my music for her . . . Miss Peters, my dear — pray set your piano-forte going."

This hint was immediately obeyed, and proved extremely conducive to the general ease. Good-natured Mr. Peters entered into conversation with the reverend missionary, and soon learnt both his destination, and the interesting fact that he and his bride were to sail from the port of Bristol the day but one following. This he judiciously took an opportunity of speedily communicating to his lady, who took care that it should not long remain a secret to any individual present, excepting Mr. Willoughby, who continued in too close conversation with his sister-in-law to permit his being made a sharer in the general feeling of satisfaction which this information produced. Even Miss Compton, on hearing it, declared, that if the bride were really going to set off immediately for Botany Bay, there to remain for the term of her natural life, she thought she should be able to look at her for the rest of the evening with great philosophy. And, in proof of her sincerity, she moved her place, and seated herself beside her friend Lady Elizabeth, more than half inclined to share in the amusement, which, notwithstanding her good resolutions, that facetious lady seemed inclined to take in contemplating the newly-married pair.

The conversation, meanwhile, between the two old acquaintances, went on with considerable interest on both sides. Mr. Willoughby again related his adventures, and introduced his pretty daughter, and then, recurring once more to Silverton, Mrs. O'Donagough said, in an accent that betokened considerable interest in the question — "Willoughby! — can you tell me any thing about your old friend Tate?"

"I have heard nothing of him of late years; but of course you know that he married his cousin, Miss Temple, very soon after we left Silverton."

"*Very soon?*" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with a sigh.

"Yes, my dear sister," replied Willoughby, with a melancholy smile; "it is not often that hearts, lost in country quarters, fail to return to the losers as they march out of the town. Happily both for the boys and girls concerned, but few such adventures end as mine did."

"Happily, indeed, for me!" replied the bride, with a toss of her head: "for aught I know, Tate may be alive now . . . and the happy wife of O'Donagough may well rejoice that no

such thralldom was the consequence of Captain Tate's presumptuous attachment!"

Though Mr. Peters was really very civil, and though Mr. James joined for several minutes in the conversation, it is probable that the reverend missionary did not enjoy it so much as his lady did listening to Mr. Willoughby; for at an early hour he told her it was time to take leave. She instantly obeyed, and began making her circular farewell — a ceremony of rather an embarrassing nature to many of the party, for out of the fifteen persons she left in the room, she kissed eight; Lady Elizabeth, Sir Edward and Lady Stephenson, Colonel Hubert, and Frederick, being permitted to escape without even an attempt at joining them in this valedictory greeting, and Miss Compton, rising at her approach, making her by far the lowest courtesy her knees ever performed, in a manner which effectually averted it from herself.

* * * * * *

Mrs. O'Donagough's departure from England was a great blessing to all the connections she left behind, for, had she continued within reach of them, it is hardly possible but some annoyance would have been the consequence. As it was, however, sorrow seemed to depart with her; for seldom does so large a portion of happiness as fell to the lot of those she had formerly tormented attend the career of any.

Colonel Hubert, although he actually did very soon become a general, never again felt any alarm on the score of his age, but had the happiness of knowing that he was beloved with all the devoted tenderness that his heart desired, and his noble character deserved. Agnes never ceased to glory in her choice, and loved nothing better than to make aunt Betsy confess that her great nephew, notwithstanding his being a general, was more like a hero than any other man she had ever seen. Miss Compton lived to see an extremely fine lad, called Compton Hubert Compton, becoming so fond of the fields and the pheasants of Compton Basset, as to leave her no rest till she had persuaded the trustees of the settlement she had made to expend the money in their hands upon the purchase of some neighbouring lands, — including the manor in which they were situated, and the converting of the old roomy farm-house into a residence which she confessed to be worthy of the representative of the ancient Compton race. This alteration, indeed, took place several years before the old lady died, and

it was at Compton Basset, thus metamorphosed, that she had the pleasure of observing to Mrs. Wilmot, that the conversation they had held on that spot together had not been altogether without effect.

Mr. Willoughby and his elegant sisters became perfectly reconciled,—a circumstance extremely agreeable to Lady Elizabeth Norris, as it gave her repeated opportunities of convincing herself that the nose of her niece, Mrs. General Hubert, was decidedly an improvement upon that of the Honourable Miss Nivett, though the family resemblance was sufficiently remarkable. Frederick and Nora were as gay and happy a couple as ever enjoyed ten thousand a year together. Occasionally, of course, they were in debt, as all people of ten thousand a year must be; but, on the whole, they contrived to bring matters round wonderfully well, and as their property was fortunately settled, and Sir Edward happened to die without children, their family of six sons and six daughters were left at last very tolerably provided for.

* * * * *

Mrs. O'Donoghue's voyage to New England was quite as agreeable as such a voyage generally is; and on arriving, she was greatly consoled for any little inequalities in her young husband's temper by the great success of his preaching. For at least six months after their arrival he was more in the fashion than any gentleman of any profession had ever been before; but at the end of that time, the reverend preacher unfortunately was present at a horse-race, upon which the recondite wisdom of the fable, which treats of a cat turned into a woman, must have become manifest to every reflecting mind acquainted with the circumstances of Mr. O'Donoghue's early life; for no sooner did the race begin, than almost unconsciously he offered a bet to one of his congregation who stood near him; and before the end of the day he was seen mounted in a blue and yellow jacket, riding for a jockey who had broken his leg in a hurdle race.

It was then that Mrs. O'Donoghue became sensible of the blessing of having a settlement; and thankful was she to the noble father of her spouse for all the care bestowed to prevent his bringing himself again to penury, when he was brought home dead to her one fine afternoon, having lost his seat and his life together in a leap upon which he had betted considerably more than he possessed.*

She mourned for him as he deserved ; but not being upon this occasion very nice upon whom she could devolve the task of wearing black, she announced to all her Sydney friends that it was not the fashion in the old world for ladies of distinction to wear that dismal colour for more than a month for any husband who died by accident ; and it was, therefore, once more, in all the splendour of her favourite rainbow colouring, that she met a few months afterwards her old friend Major Allen.

He entered into no very tedious or particular details respecting the reasons for, or the manner of, his voyage out, but testified much cordial satisfaction at the meeting ; while, on the other hand, Mrs. O'Donagough was as remarkably communicative as he was the reverse, dilating largely on my Lord _____'s careful attention to her interest on her marriage with his son, who had insisted upon coming out in a fit of religious enthusiasm, which, as she sensibly observed, was not at all likely to last.

It was not very long after this meeting that Mrs. O'Donagough became aware of the truth of the song, which says,

*“ Mais on retourne toujours
A ses premières amours.”*

For it was evident that the sentiment which circumstances had so rudely shaken at Clifton a year or two before, was again putting forth its leaves and flowers, and that it depended upon herself alone whether she should not yet become the wife of the accomplished Major Allen.

For a few weeks she struggled with her remaining affection, but at the end of that time it overpowered all her doubts and fears, and only stipulating that, as before, all she had should be firmly settled upon herself, she once more entered the holy state of matrimony. In justice to the peerage, it ought to be stated, that on this her third wedding-day she wore around her neck a very handsome necklace of shell, carefully sent out to her by the confidential agent of my Lord Mucklejudy

THE END.

ADVENTURES

OF THE *Conway Shipley*.

BARNABYS IN AMERICA,

A Sequel to the *Widow Barnaby*.

London
Aug 59.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHORESS OF

'THE WIDOW BARNABY,' 'THE WIDOW MARRIED,' 'THE VICAR OF WREXHILL,'
'ADVENTURES OF JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW,' ETC. ETC.



LONDON :

WARD AND LOCK, 158, FLEET STREET.

LONDON:

* PETER AND GALPIN, BELLE SAUVAGE PRINTING WORKS,
LUDGATE HILL, E.C.

THE WIDOW WEDDED;

OR, THE ADVENTURES OF

THE BARNABYS IN AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE affections of the human heart are various ; all equally genuine when nature is untampered with, but infinitely modified as to their intensity. The love of a parent for its offspring has been acknowledged on all hands to be one of the strongest and least uncertain of these affections, partaking so largely of instinct, as fairly to class it among the immutable laws of nature, and though certainly shared by the beasts which perish, yet felt to be venerable from the divinity of the origin whence the common well-spring rises. There is a modification, however, of this parental love, which is wholly free from, and undegraded by, any community either with the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, the reptiles which crawl upon the earth, or the birds which fly towards the heavens—there is a parental love, so purely spiritual, so wholly intellectual, as to place it in sublimity far above any other affection of the human heart.

“What may this be?” demand the uninitiated. Unhappy ones! Like a childless wife, and a husband without an heir, ye are unconscious of the fondest yearning that ever swelled a human breast! But is there an author who does not at once secretly acknowledge his sympathy in the feeling thus described! Oh no! not one.

Yet, elevated as is the nature of this intellectual love, there be many who are shy to confess it. Many, strange to say, who affect a total indifference, nay, almost oblivion, concerning those offsprings of the brain, for whom by every law, human and divine, they ought to feel the tenderest partiality. “Let no such men be trusted;” it is doing them injustice to believe that they can be sincere.

Far otherwise is it with the progenitor of the widow Barnaby. I scruple not to confess that with all her faults, and she has *some*, I love her dearly: I owe her many mirthful moments, and the deeper pleasure still of believing that she has brought mirthful moments to others also. Honestly avowing this to be the case, *can any one wonder, can any one blame me, for feeling an affec-*

tionate longing at my heart to follow her upon the expedition upon which I sent her when last we parted? An expedition, too, that was to lead her to a land which all the world knows I cherish in my memory with peculiar delight? I will not believe it, but trusting to the long-established and good-humoured toleration of those who descend to listen to my gossipings, I will forthwith proceed to tell them all that has happened to this dear excellent lady since General Hubert and Mr. Stephenson left her in her grand drawing-room in Curzon-street, surrounded by her family and friends.

CHAPTER II.

"I HAVE enjoyed that, Patty, and I won't deny it," cried the *ci-devant* widow Barnaby, as the above-named gentlemen quitted her drawing-room. "Heaven knows I am not a spiteful person, and I can forgive and forget as soon as anybody, but it was absolutely beyond nature not to enjoy letting those two puffed-up-top-sawyer fellows see that you had contrived to get married, my dear, while the whey-faced Miss Elizabeth was still a poor, pale, thin ghost of a spinster, as I may say—for so she is, dearest, compared to you."

"Oh, lor! don't talk of her, mamma! The very thought of her makes me sick—if it don't I'll be hanged," replied Madame Espartero Christinino Tornorino, giving a little shudder, and creeping still closer to her loving husband, till her handsome face was half hid in his bosom. "Oh, my goodness! For how much, I wonder, would I change places with her?"

"Not for a trifle, I have a notion, my dear," said her mother, laughing heartily; "but I'd give just sixpence to see how my conceited niece Agnes looks, when she hears you are married. I'd make an even bet that she won't believe it. What will you lay me that she does not take it for a joke of that gay chap, Frederic Stephenson?"

"No, no, she would if she could, I don't doubt that, mamma, in the least," replied the bride; "but it is not so easy to do as to wish. I suppose she will have some wedding-cake sent her, won't she?"

"I'll take care of that, my dear," said Miss Louisa Perkins, nodding her head with a look of great intelligence. "Your dear mamma has given me a little hint about that business already, and of course your own noble relations will come first."

"Oh, yes! my darling creature!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, with a stifled sigh, "we will all take care of that, depend upon it; and do—oh, do—my dearest, dearest Patty! let me have ~~the~~ your name-cards together! It will be such a delight."

O'Donagough will just give me a shilling or two for it, I'll go out and buy the silver twist for them this very moment. Oh!" with another sigh, "it will be such a sweet office!"

"By-the-by, that is well thought of, Matilda," observed the fond and provident mother. "Mercy on me, Patty, now one comes to think of it, what a whirl you have put us all in, with this frolic of yours—silver twist is the least of it, Matilda! There must be favours, just as if we had been all regularly at church together, you know. I am not going to let the wedding of my only daughter with a first-rate Spanish nobleman pass over as if we were just common ordinary people, who had never been to court, or distinguished in any way."

"Of course you won't!" exclaimed both the Miss Perkinses in a breath, and Miss Matilda, confident in intimacy, added, "I am sure you would be a fool if you did."

"And then there is the sending it to the papers you know, mamma," said Madame E. C. Tornorino, with energy; "I do beg that may not be forgotten."

"Mercy on me," cried her mother, "to think that I should keep sitting here with such an awful deal of business to do! It is all very natural that you two should like to keep together, there, billing and cooing like a pair of wood-pigeons, but it will never do for us. My dear Don Tornorino, will you just step down into your father-in-law's library, and look for a pen and ink, and a sheet of paper, and then I will give you leave to whisper to Patty till dinner-time, if you like it."

The tall bridegroom rose from his place to obey her, and using a little gentle violence to disengage his coat-collar from the fond grasp of his affectionate bride, very respectfully pronounced the words "Yes, ma'am," and left the room.

"Isn't he beautiful, mamma?" demanded the young wife, as soon as he had disappeared. "He is ten thousand million times handsomer than Jack ever was or ever will be, isn't he?"

"He is a very fine man, Patty, there is no doubt of it," replied Mrs. O'Donagough. "I always admired that style of man—the whiskers and hair, and all that, you know. I have always thought that it gave particularly the air of a gentleman—I might, indeed, say of a nobleman."

"Exactly that!" cried Miss Matilda Perkins. "Mrs. O'Donagough always expresses herself so happily. He is a *fine* man—a stylish man, Patty. That is exactly what he is—and many and many's the girl that will look upon you with envy, my dear, take my word for that."

"Well, I can't help it, if they do, Matilda," replied the well-pleased Madame Tornorino. "But I wish you would not send him away, mamma! Why could not Matilda, or your own particular friend, Louisa, have gone for the pen and ink? I do think it is very hard to send one's husband away the very first day after one is married to him."

"But who could guess, Patty, that he would be staying so unaccountably long?" returned her mother.

"Lor bless my soul, I could have made the paper by this time, and I shall have altogether forgot what came into my head about what was to be sent to the newspaper—haven't you got a scrap of paper either of you, and a pencil?"

The ready hand of the faithful Louisa was in her pocket in an instant, and from its varied stores she drew forth the "Lady's Polite Remembrancer" for the year, which contained a little pencil, very neatly cut for writing.

"Will this do, dear Mrs. O'Donagough?" said she, presenting it.

"Do? Lor no! I shall break it in half a minute. But, however, that don't much signify, I may just write down a word or two, to keep what I was thinking of in my head, it was so exactly the right sort of thing. Give me some paper, Louisa?"

"Paper? Oh, dear me, where can I find any, I wonder? Do, my dear darling Miss Patty, tell me where I can find a bit of paper for good mamma?"

On being thus addressed, the newly-married lady suddenly sprung from the sofa on which she had been seated, and rushing across the room with a movement more resembling the spring of a powerful young panther than anything else, seized the gentle Louisa by the shoulders, and shook her heartily.

"I'll teach you to call me Miss Patty, you nasty old maid, you! How dare you do any such thing? Don't you know that if I am Miss Patty still, I am just no better than I ought to be, and a pretty thing that is for you to say of your own best friend's only daughter. Arn't you ashamed of yourself—arn't you then?"

"I am, indeed, my dearest Mrs. Torn—oh, dear me! How shall I speak what I don't no more understand than if it was just so much Greek? You must please, indeed you must, just to write down for me your name, exactly as you wish to have it spoken, and you shall see that I will never do the same thing again—no, never as long as I live."

"Well, then, don't bother any more about it now, but just get mamma some paper."

By dint of hunting in various drawers, a sheet of paper was at length found, upon which Mrs. O'Donagough, notwithstanding the fragility of her pencil, contrived to scrawl the following paragraph:

"By special license—Martha, the only daughter and sole heiress of John William O'Donagough, Esq., to Don Espartero Christinino Tornorino. We are happy to learn from the most unquestionable authority that, though a foreigner, this distinguished nobleman is in every respect worthy of the enviable preference which has been given him by the most admired beauty of the present season. The sensation produced by the appearance of this young lady at the last drawing-room, will probably cause her immediate marriage to be a source of disappointment to many."

Having, after a good many revisions, completed her composition, Mrs. O'Donagough read it aloud, with all the dignity it deserved, and then said—

“What do you think of that, ladies?”

“Why it is first-rate beautiful, mamma,” replied Patty, rubbing her hands; “only, you know, it is a downright lie as ever was told, for me and my darling were married by banns, we took care about that. As to all the rest, it is true enough for all I know to the contrary.”

“Well, dear, and what does that little scratch of the pen signify, whether it's true or not,” demanded her mother; “nobody will know anything about it, and it sounds better, doesn't it?”

“Well, there—let it stand, mamma. It is not worth disputing about, certainly. Married is married all the world over. And what you say about *him* is all right and correct. But where is he, darling beauty! I tell you what, Mrs. O'Donagough, it won't do for you to be sending my husband about right and left—mind that, if you please. And now you see papa's keeping him, whether he will or no. I won't bear it any longer, that's what I won't, so good-by to you all.” And so saying, Madame Tornorino darted out of the room.

“Oh heavens! How that charming creature's affection touches me!” exclaimed Miss Matilda Perkins. “How animated, how beautiful is her conjugal tenderness! Ah, who can witness it, and not look with envy upon happiness so pure and so exalted,” she added, almost inaudibly.

Patty meanwhile made her way rapidly by a sort of sliding movement of her hand, down the banisters, rather than by the use of her feet (a mode of descending the stairs to which she was greatly addicted when in good spirits), to the door of the room dignified by the appellation of “the library,” and throwing it open without ceremony, found herself, considerably to her surprise, in the presence of two persons who were, beyond all question, wrangling violently; and unhappily for her new-born felicity, poor little lady! these persons were her father and her husband.

“How dare you look so savagely cross at my darling Tornorino, papa?” she exclaimed, with great indignation, and at the same time throwing her arms round her husband, who, as well as her father, was standing. “How dare you, I say? Don't knit your brows at me, papa, for you know as well as I do, that I don't care the hundredth part of a farthing for your frowns—and that I didn't either before I was a married woman; so I leave you to guess how much I care for them now. But I won't have my dear darling plagued, that I won't—so mind what you are about, old gentleman.”

“This is no time for playing the fool, Patty,” replied her father, in a voice which, despite all the courage of her native spirit, strengthened as it now was by her matronly position, made her quail. “Did I serve you right, hussy, I should push you out”

doors this instant, with the beggarly fellow you have thought proper to choose for a husband."

"Why do you let him talk so, Don Tornorino?" exclaimed poor Patty, bursting into tears. "You know it's all lies! Why do you let him go on so?"

"Hold your tongue, girl, and hear me!" resumed her father, in a tone that neither the bride nor bridegroom could listen to unmoved. "I have been asking this fine whiskered hero of yours a few questions, and from his agreeable answers, it appears perfectly evident that the coat upon his back constitutes by far the most valuable part of his possessions. This being the case, my young madam, I will beg you to inform me how and where you intend to live?"

"I don't believe a word of it, I don't," sobbed Patty, trembling both with rage and fear. "He is a Don, he told me so himself; I know he is a Don—arn't you a Don, my dear, arn't you?"

"Never mind. You no talk, Miss Patty, say anything à propos de moi. Listen, dutiful, à votre bon papa," replied her husband, disengaging himself from her arms, and placing himself behind a chair, in order, as it should seem, to keep out of her way.

"Do you call me Miss Patty, you traitor of a man?" screamed the unfortunate wife. "If my papa is the dear good papa he used to be, he'll teach you to call your own lawful wife by such a name as that—won't you, dear pa?—won't you make him treat me like a married woman?"

If the high-minded Mr. O'Donagough did love anything in the world besides himself, it certainly was his daughter; and even at the present moment, though harassed by a pretty considerable variety of disagreeable thoughts, he could not see the showers of tears which fell from her bright eyes, without enough of pity and tenderness to moderate the angry feelings with which he had just addressed her, and to produce a tone of much greater gentleness as he said—

"I am sorry for you, my poor Patty, with all my heart and soul. But it will do no good to mince the matter, you have married yourself to a fellow without a sixpence, and there are some fathers who would make little difficulty of easing themselves at once of all trouble concerning you, by turning you both into the street together. But I have not the heart to do it, Patty—though, God knows, at this time the fewer burdens I have the better. However, your mother's income is settled upon her, and in case of the worst, may be worth keeping. And so, all things considered, I am determined to treat you better than you deserve, and take you along with me. I have explained myself pretty fully to your husband, and he has wit enough, whatever other qualities he may want, to understand how I shall expect he will behave himself. So no more sobbing and crying, Patty. We must one and all make the best of a very bad matter. Things might be worse—I don't mean as to your marriage, for I don't see exactly how that could

8; but I *might* have been found considerably worse prepared for an accident that has happened to me."

"What *do* you mean, papa?" demanded the astonished Patty, her eyes opened greatly beyond their usual ample dimensions, her curls hastily pushed back, and her head extended forwards to the utmost extent of her handsome throat. "What, in heaven's name, are you talking about? If my Tornorino is not really a Don, he is a monstrous liar, and that he knows as well as I. But I am ready to forget and forgive, because he is such a darling, and because it is as clear as light that he only said it for the sake of being the more sure of getting me; and if you'll forgive and forget it too, papa, it will be very good-natured of you. But what in the world has that to do with my 'going along with you.' Going along where, I should like to know? I don't mean to go along anywhere, and that's flat. I mean to stay here, and show off my wedding-ring and my wedding-clothes, and my handsome husband, to my aunt Herbert, and my cousins, and that nasty brute of a beast, Jack that was, and everybody else that I ever saw or knew in all my life before. So please not to say any more about 'going along;' for all the *along* I shall be going, will just be driving along the streets in mamma's beautiful carriage to buy wedding-clothes."

The spirit of Mr. John William Patrick Allen O'Donagough seldom failed him; and, to do him justice, it must be avowed that he rarely permitted any emotion to be visible on his countenance, which it was his wish to hide. But as he listened to this speech from the animated Patty, he looked a less great, a less philosophical man than usual. For a moment he turned away his head to avoid her gaze, and his complexion varied. But this lasted not long; a very short interval sufficed to restore him to his wonted happy hardihood; and then he composedly turned to his son-in-law, saying, with very perfect self-possession—

"Get up stairs, Tornorino; I want to speak to my daughter alone."

The Don, who did not appear to show in any large degree the firmness of nerve possessed by his distinguished father-in-law, delayed not for the hundredth part of a second to obey him, but instantly slipped out of the room, despite the extended hand of his wife, which seemed stretched out as if to "clutch him," and impede his departure.

"Sit down, Patty," said Mr. O'Donagough.

The puzzled Patty obeyed, her eyes still steadily fixed upon her mysterious parent.

"I am sorry to tell you, Patty, that your silly marriage is not the only, nor perhaps the worst, misfortune that has fallen upon us within the last twenty-four hours," said he.

"I wish you would not go on talking of my marriage in that way, papa," said the bride, recovering her courage as her father's manner towards her softened. "I'm the best judge, I suppose, whether my husband is the man I love; and I tell you, once for all,

that he is. And if it turns out that he is not particularly rich because of his leaving most of his money behind in his own country, what can that signify, I should like to know, when, as mamma says, I am your only sole heiress; and you, as rich as you are, with your fine house and carriage, and going to court, and the lord knows what besides?"

Mr. O'Donagough knit his brows, but presently relaxed the frown, and sighed deeply.

"That is just the point, my poor dear child, upon which I want to speak to you. I have a very singular history to disclose, Patty, which will explain, only too well, all that now appears mysterious to you," said he.

Having thus spoken, he paused for a moment, and fixed his eyes full upon her face with great solemnity; but just as he seemed about to resume his discourse, Patty stopped him by saying—

"Pray, papa, will everybody go on calling me *Patty*, as you do? I can't say I like it at all; it's a monstrous disappointment to me; why shouldn't I be called by my husband's name, with *Mrs.* before it, like other married women? I do think it is very hard."

"I will call you *Mrs. Tornorino*, my dear, if you wish it," replied her father, with a smile which certainly, notwithstanding his constitutional strength of mind, gave him a good deal the air of 'a very foolish, fond old man;' "but you know, darling, that when parents have got a beautiful young married daughter, like you, they always continue to call them by their Christian name—that is, as long as they continue young and beautiful."

"Do they? Oh! I did not know that. Well, then, papa, you may go on so, if you please. But I hope nobody else will, for *Tornorino* is certainly the very prettiest name I ever heard in my life. Don't you think it is, papa?"

"My dear, dear *Patty*! I dare say I shall think any name that belongs to you pretty. But I have a great deal of business, *Patty*, that must be done directly, and I do beg you will listen to what I am going to say. Do now, there's a good girl!"

"Now I am sure you say that only to torment me, papa, and for no other reason in the whole world!" exclaimed *Patty*, with great vehemence. "You will never make me believe that let a married woman be as young as she will, she ought to be called *GIRL*! It is a downright insult; and if *Tornorino* has as much spirit as a rat, he won't bear it, that he won't!"

Mr. O'Donagough's fondness began to give way to anger, and it was decidedly more a ban than a blessing which burst from his lips, as he started out of his chair, and striding towards his daughter placed his hands upon her shoulder, shaking her with more energy than gentleness.

"By the heaven above us, *Patty*, I am afraid you are a greater fool than I took you for! If you were six, instead of sixteen, you might listen to me when I tell you that I want to speak on ~~that~~ of the greatest possible importance. But if you really are for

anything but your own nonsense, I shall leave you to
and that may very likely lead to the turning you and
mustache into the street before you are many hours older.”
The words were uttered with very considerable vehemence,
before Patty could sufficiently recover her wits to answer them,
her father had passed through the door, and banged it together
again.

CHAPTER III.

WITHSTANDING the dauntless style in which the spirited young
man had received her father's rebuke upon the penniless nature of
the connection she had formed, she was not altogether unconscious
it was deserved, or indifferent to the dangers which might
befall herself and her “darling,” were she to get downright cross
with her. It was therefore with no lingering movement that she
sprung across the room after him, threw open the door again,
and sprung upon the back of his neck just as his foot reached the
stair, much after the fashion of a favourite young Newfound-
dog who has attained his full size, but not his full gravity and
maturity. Most assuredly Mr. O'Donagough was in no playful
mood, and perhaps his very first impulse upon receiving this power-
less assault, was to have rejected it with equal vigour by a backward
movement of the leg just raised in act to mount. But he felt that
as the hand of Patty that was at his throat, and his “one
eye” mastering him, he turned round with something between a
smile and a frown, saying—

“Don't be a fool, Patty. What d'ye want?”
“Want? my own dear pap? want you, to be sure. How could
I run away from your own poor dear Patty so? and she just
kissed me too! and all for nothing in the world but because she
wanted to have a bit of fun with you! Come along back with me
and see if I don't listen to all you have got to say, as grave as
I like. You see if I don't.”

O'Donagough, wholly overcome by this pretty *naïveté*, very
graciously threw his arm round her waist, and returned into the
room they had left; but still his step and manner were so very
manly that Madame Tornorino began to be frightened outright,
when he had placed her in one chair, and himself in another,
directly opposite to her, she looked as sober and sedate as he could
possibly have desired.

“It will be necessary, my dear child,” he began, “in order to
enable you fully understand my present very embarrassing situation,
I should relate to you some circumstances of my early life,
of which you are, and indeed your excellent mother also, as yet
unacquainted. While still a very young man, my dear Patty,
I speak with the degree of frankness necessary to the full
revelation of my singular history, by no means ill-looking, in
the preceding chapter.”

dear, I unfortunately happened to be quartered with my regiment at Windsor. The Regent, subsequently our beloved monarch, George the Fourth, was holding his splendid court there. The precise time of which I speak need not be mentioned. Indeed, for many painfully important reasons, it will be greatly best that I should avoid doing so. And I will, therefore, beg of you, my dear, to ask me no questions. All that is essential you should know I will freely communicate to you. And for the rest——”

Here Mr. O'Donoghough paused for a moment, and rested his forehead upon his extended hand, as if wishing to conceal some too powerful emotion with which his soul was struggling; but after one deep-drawn sigh, he proceeded—

“Amidst the brightest ornaments of that splendid court, my dear child, was a young lady possessed of a degree of beauty, which, even at this distance of time, I cannot recall without a violence of emotion that shakes every nerve, and teaches me that there are feelings that neither time nor circumstance can obliterate. But, alas! my Patty, the dignity of her birth and station equalled the beauty of her person. The proudest nobles of the land vied with each other for her favour. All the world loved her, but she, alas! loved me alone! This too lovely, this too beloved lady, was in the habit of walking frequently upon the terrace of the castle. Her high rank insured her admittance at all times, and I, from my military command, found it only too easy to invent *countable* reasons for being there also. That terrace, that noble Windsor-terrace, Patty, is known to millions, and remembered fondly by all who have seen it, as one of the most enchanting spots on earth. But alas! where is the aching, throbbing, palpitating memory which recollects like mine? Where is there another heart which bounds, yet sinks, which trembles, yet exults at the mere sound of its name, as mine does? My child, it was upon that terrace that the mutual love of that noble lady and your too happy, yet too wretched father was mutually confessed and mutually returned. She loved me, Patty! Loved me, did I say? She worshipped—she adored me! And I—can you blame me, my dear child, if——” here Mr. O'Donoghough was very strongly agitated; notwithstanding his evident struggles to master his feelings, he found himself obliged to draw forth his pocket-handkerchief, and apply it to his eyes—“can you, I say, blame me, Patty, if I loved too?”

“Good gracious, no, papa! Not the least bit in the world,” replied his daughter. “I am sure you would have been a most horrid monster of a man if you had not. But do go on, pa, and tell me what happened next? Did you run away with her, as my Don did with me?”

“Patty, I dare not tell you more of this eventful history.”

“Well I never!” exclaimed Patty, looking exceedingly disappointed; “no never in all my life heard anything like that. Just as if telling could signify now, when it must have been *an* and ages ago. Don't be foolish, papa, there's a dear good

go on, and, for goodness' sake, tell me all that happened between you and this grand lady. Well to be sure, it's no great wonder that you hold your head so high as you do sometimes, I must say that for you, pap. But, pray, does mamma know all about it? Whether she does or not, however, don't signify a straw, for I am positively dying to hear the rest, and hear it I must. So go on, papa, when I bid you."

"For the rest, my dear, there is but little more that can or ought to be said," replied Mr. O'Donagough, with an air of discretion befitting the circumstances. "All that I can further relate concerns myself only. The vigilant eyes of those who surrounded the noble lady, who, by the way, it is necessary I should tell you was a countess in her own right, were not slow in discovering how matters stood, and the consequence to me may be easily guessed. Though well-born, and highly educated, and with a military reputation (for why should I deny it, Patty?) of the very highest class, I was still considered as immeasurably below the noble object of my love. Her proud and cruel friends would not for an instant endure the idea of a marriage between us, which would make her title descend to my offspring. I was ordered to go abroad immediately, and a multitude of injurious reports were industriously attached to my name, in the hope of estranging the heart of my beloved countess. I went, Patty, a broken-hearted wanderer; I quitted my native shores, and looked my last upon my noble love. But guess my agonies when I tell you, that almost the first news I received from England, brought me the account of her marriage with a nobleman of rank equal to her own! It is torture to remember it. But no more of this, Patty. I must not, I dare not dwell on all I have suffered. Years rolled on, and brought with them the healing balm that ever rests upon their wings. I saw your excellent mother. I saw, admired, wooed, and won her, Patty; and O! for her sake, as well as for other most important reasons, I would not wish this history to be greatly talked of. That you should converse respecting it with your mother, is of course perfectly natural. But do not dwell upon the passion I have described to you—it may pain her. By your own feelings for Don Tornorino, my dear love, you may guess what her's are for me. The high nobility of my first passion will not suffice to heal the mortification arising from knowing that she never could have been more than second in my heart. You will now, in your present situation, easily understand all this, and will have too much tenderness for her, I am sure, to wound her feelings unnecessarily. You understand me?"

"Yes, I suppose I understand you, papa," replied Patty, "but I can't help thinking that what you say is very nonsensical, because it is downright humbug, and nothing else, to talk of you and mamma being like Tornorino and me. However, I'll do just whatever you like about it. And though you are so old now, it is a beautiful love story as ever was wrote in a book, and I must and will tell my Don of it. You won't mind that I suppose?"

"No, my dear Patty, not at all," replied her father, affectionately. "On the contrary, my love, I wish him to be made acquainted with all the peculiarities of my situation. They *are* very peculiar; and now I must proceed to explain to you why it is, that now, for the first time, I consider it proper to open my heart to you on this painful subject. It is, believe me, a theme inexpressibly distressing to me, particularly at this moment, when I would willingly have devoted myself to making the early days of your married life, my poor child, pass gaily and joyously. But unhappily I am compelled to announce to you the very disagreeable fact that, unless your husband has a home of his own to take you to, your honeymoon, my pretty Patty, must be passed on board ship."

"Good gracious, why? I shan't like that at all, I promise you. I mean that mamma shall go out with me directly to buy some wedding clothes, and there will be no fun in being fine unless there is somebody to admire me. I do beg, papa, that wherever you are going, you won't set off till I have received all my visits, and returned them too. I am dying for my cousin Elizabeth to see my wedding-ring, and hear me call my tall, grand-looking husband, Tornorino. I am certain as that I am here, that she will be just ready to die with envy."

"Nothing can be more natural than your feelings, my dear Patty, and it grieves me to the heart that I cannot indulge you in them. But you have not heard my sad story yet, my dear. The persecution I have undergone has been terrible beyond belief. As long as the sweet angel lived I was obliged either to remain out of the country, or else return under a feigned name, and live in the most complete retirement, to avoid the possibility of her knowing that I was near her. Alas! Patty, a jealous husband is the most terrible of tyrants. God grant that this dreadful fate may never be yours."

"Oh! there is no danger at all of that, papa, for I love my handsome husband a great deal too well to let anybody else make love to me."

"That is a great blessing, my dear, a very great blessing. But to return to my sad story. One might have hoped, Patty, might one not, that when the lovely countess was no more, the tyrants might have ceased to persecute? The hope of this was, I assure you, the only thing which enabled me to retain my senses when I lost her. But no! even in this I have been deceived.

"For a short time, indeed, after my last return from abroad, on which return you and your excellent mother accompanied me, I was permitted to breathe the air of my native land unmolested; and it was dear to me because it was the air my Eleonora had breathed! But last night I received the astounding information that your appearance at court (where you were recognised as my daughter), had given rise to the most injurious suspicions. There are persons in certain circles, Patty, who have not scrupled to hint that the excellent woman, whom before heaven I declare to be your

is no more to you than your nurse, and that your real mother was no other than the lamented heiress I have named to you! This, as you will immediately perceive, throws a doubt upon the succession to her title and estates which, if it takes wind, may plunge the whole of her noble family into the horrible exposure of a trial and a lawsuit. I have accordingly received official hints that unless by at once withdrawing myself I relieve the family from this alarm, measures will be immediately resorted to for the purpose of removing me from England for ever. I leave you to guess what my feelings were on receiving this intimation."

"Why, they don't mean to say that I ought to be the countess, do they, papa?" demanded Patty, with considerable vivacity.

"Not exactly that, my dear. No one, I believe, has hitherto ventured to assert as a fact, what, under the circumstances, it would be so exceedingly difficult to prove. Nobody, as yet, has gone that length. But be this as it may, of the necessity of our immediately leaving England there can be no question. Were I to delay a week, I have little doubt that I should find myself an object of the most tyrannical persecution—and that, probably, for life. I have, therefore, no time to lose, and I have taken this early opportunity of communicating these facts to you, in order that you might make up your mind either to accompany your mother and myself to the United States of America, or to go immediately with your husband to such home as he can provide for you. How do you decide, Patty?"

"I will tell you in a minute, papa, if you will only let me ask you one or two questions," she replied.

"Then make short work of your questions, Patty, for I have no time to lose," said Mr. O'Donagough, once again portentously knitting his brows.

"Don't look cross, papa, and I will have done in a minute. And please, in the first place, to tell me whether it is quite sure and certain that I never can be a countess in my own right?"

"I am sorry to say, my dear, that there is not the slightest chance of it," gravely replied Mr. O'Donagough.

"That's no go, then," responded Patty, with a slight sigh.

"Now then," she resumed, "my next question is, whether being so fond of me as you are, and I your only child, whether, I say, you could not give me, before you go, fortune enough for me and Don Tornorino to live on here a little, in good flashing style, just to plague the Huberts, and that nasty beast, Jack, before we go out after you and mamma to America?"

"Here, again, my dear child," said Mr. O'Donagough, with a truly paternal smile, "I recognise the most natural feelings, and believe me, I fully sympathise in them; but I lament to say that what you ask is altogether impossible. For the tyrants who pursue me with their jealous vengeance——"

"Do you mean the lady's husband, papa?" cried Patty, with a sudden burst of irrepressible curiosity.

"Pardon me, my dear, I cannot answer," replied her father with solemnity. "Nor is it in any way necessary that I should, in order to make you fully comprehend my position. Whoever they be who pursue me, their power over me is such that I cannot, without the most imminent risk to my liberty, and even to my life, attempt to realise any part of my property. Indeed, I have but too much reason to fear that by far the greater portion of the funds upon which I reckoned as the source from which your fortune should be drawn, and our own handsome manner of living supplied, will be rendered entirely unavailable by this last stroke of barbarous jealousy. All that can be done for our future comfort, depend upon it, my dear Patty, I will do; but if you and your husband, after properly taking into consideration the fact of my almost ruined fortunes, shall still decide upon accompanying us into exile, it must be with the understanding that you are uniting your fortunes to those of a poor man—compared to what I believed myself to be—a very poor man, and must conduct yourselves accordingly."

Patty looked exceedingly grave, and remained silent considerably longer than was her wont on any occasion; but her father wished to hear what she had got to say in reply to his communication, and waited patiently till she spoke. At length, after heaving rather a deep sigh, she said, with an expression somewhat indicative of alarm upon her countenance—

"I don't know what my Don will say to it, papa, because I always told him that you was so monstrous rich. Good gracious, what shall I do, if he should grow cross about it and leave off loving me? I do think, upon my honour, that it would drive me mad."

"In that case, my dear love," replied her father, composedly, "I should, of course, turn him out of doors immediately."

"What? my own dear, darling husband? and I left by myself without any husband at all? No, no, Mr. Pap, you'll do no such thing as that, I promise you. What you must do is this, dear papa, you must squeeze out every penny you can save from every other earthly thing, and give it all to my dear Don; and that, you know, will keep him in good humour, even if you don't happen to live out in America in such a grand house as this. That is what you really will do, my own dear darling pap, isn't it?"

And Patty sprang across the space which divided them, threw her arms round his neck, and began kissing him with more vehemence than she had ever done before, save once when she had conceived an ardent affection for a pink-satin dress, which his fist alone could enable her to obtain.

Upon that occasion she had succeeded—the pink-satin dress had been the reward of her kisses, and it was, perhaps, the remembrance of this fact which made her now shower them so liberally. But her father seemed not in the kissing vein; for he disengaged self, though gently, from her clinging embraces, and quitted

"The best thing you can do, Patty, is to tell your husband the whole of the melancholy story which I have just told you; he will then understand how things are, and if, as I suspect, his own circumstances are such as still to make his sticking close to us the best thing he can do, I dare say he will have common sense enough to keep his ground without being very troublesome. It is, indeed, not impossible that I may find him useful, and in that case I have no doubt but we shall go on very comfortably."

Patty pretty well knew when there was anything to be gained from "Pa," and when there was not; the present use of which experience was to make her quietly walk off, saying, "that she would soon make her dear Don understand all about it."

CHAPTER IV.

To prepare his beautiful Patty for the change she was about to undergo, was perhaps not the least disagreeable of the various operations which Mr. John William Patrick Allen O'Donagough knew that he had to perform before he set out upon the expedition which (as doubtless all the world will remember) General Hubert had so strenuously recommended. It had taken the affectionate father some fifteen or twenty minutes to decide in what manner the news could be conveyed to the happy bride, his daughter, with the least annoyance to her sensitive feelings; but from the moment the matter presented itself to his imagination in the shape which has been shown forth in the last chapter, every unpleasant sensation vanished. Nay, the interview, which he had previously dreaded, became, in a considerable degree, agreeable to him.

It is, I believe, a notorious fact in natural history, that, whatever instinct or faculty nature has bestowed upon an animal with predominating strength, causes in its exercise the most decided gratification; and it would be difficult to bring in evidence a stronger confirmation of this interesting phenomenon, than the state of feeling produced on the mind of Mr. O'Donagough by the act of lying. His spirits seemed to rise, his faculties to expand themselves, his features assumed a look of animation and intelligence inconceivably beyond what they ever manifested at any other time; and if the observer's eye could have gone deeper and penetrated to his heart, it would have been found gaily bounding in his bosom, in a sort of triumphant jubilee at the bold feats of his undaunted tongue.

On the whole, therefore, the half-hour he had bestowed upon Patty had done him good, and it was with no faltering voice that he called to her as she quitted the room, bidding her to send her mother to him.

Mr. O'Donagough was, as we have said, a man of very considerable firmness of nerve, and had never, at any period of his

life, been found infirm of purpose. Within half an hour of leaving his "third drawing-room" on the preceding night, in the manner described in a former series of the records of this interesting family, he had pretty fully made up his mind as to what he should do with himself and his belongings. Though he felt that the earth was not wholly before him where to choose, he was aware that quite a sufficient quantity remained open for him to prevent any embarrassment on the score of elbow-room. Nor had he that very dispiriting misfortune to contend with, which arises from the want of those sinews so well known to be necessary in every operation which man carries on, either with or against man. His lady's provident wisdom had taken care, at the time of their marriage, that all that was hers should remain her own, and her little income was therefore as long as they remained together a sort of *pis aller* fund, which would always prevent their being in actual want. This was well, snug, comfortable, and soothing; but this was, by no means, the most agreeable financial feature in his case.

From the time that—to use his own phrase—he had sown those wild oats which had, in some way or other, occasioned his last excursion across the ocean to the present period, when it was likely that a second voyage would be the best remedy for the little *contre-temps* which had occurred in his "third drawing-room," he had never ceased adding to that small stock of private pocket-money, which he had begun to collect at his sociable whist-parties at Sydney. It is hardly fair, perhaps, to lift the veil of reserve by which he had ever kept the amount of this concealed, even from the wife of his bosom; but, as accident has made me acquainted with the amount thus collected, I am tempted to name it as a proof (useful may it prove to the unthrifty!) of what may be done by steady and persevering labour.

Mr. O'Donagough, then, at this time, stood possessed of a sum amounting to £12,899, of which his wife had no more knowledge than the man in the moon. And this, be it observed, was safely stowed and funded in the English stocks, so that it was exclusive of the contents of poor Mr. Ronaldson's purse and pocket-book, which, however, amounted to very nearly a thousand more, and which now made the pleasant-feeling lining of his own coat-pocket. Assuredly, if ever man deserved the honourable title of a *chevalier d'industrie*, it was Mr. John William Patrick Allen O'Donagough, for never did he lose an opportunity of putting his time to profit, let it occur at what period of twenty-four hours it might. It may be thought, perhaps, that, in this statement of Mr. O'Donagough's possessions, I have carelessly overlooked the very showy furniture of his handsome house in Curzon-street; but, in point of fact, I have been strictly accurate inasmuch as no single article of that furniture had been paid for, and consequently, in a statement so precise as the present, it could not properly have been brought to account.

Mr. O'Donagough was in the act of mentally ~~view~~

precisely the same figures as I have been now laying before the reader, when the door of his library opened and his wife appeared. The interview, which was about to take place, would have been considerably more agreeable to the gentleman's feelings, had he deemed it advisable, in stating to his lady the sudden necessity for breaking up his London establishment, to have indulged in the same imaginative species of narrative as that in which he had conveyed the same information to his daughter. But after a moment's consideration, his admirable judgment decided him against attempting anything of the kind; for he felt that, in the first place, it would rob him of the advantage he might hope to obtain from the very acute faculties of his admirable wife; and secondly, those very acute faculties, now fully ripened into strong practical sharpness, would be exceedingly likely to detect what was purely inventive, and thereby render his explanation of no effect.

Determined, therefore, to be as candid in his exposition of facts as if he had been stating matters to his own conscience, he lost no time in circumlocution.

"Shut the door, wife," he said, rather gravely, as Mrs. O'Donagough came in, and then added, rather in a lower key, "and you may as well bolt it, my dear, and then we shall not be interrupted."

"Dear me, Mr. O'Donagough, how very foolish this is of you!" she replied, but obeyed his command however before she advanced into the room. "I know exactly, word for word, what you are going to say, as well as if you had spoken it every syllable already."

"Do you, my dear?" said O'Donagough. "I doubt it!"

"Yes, I do. You are going to make a preachment as long as my arm about Patty's marriage; and what good is it when the thing is done and over? I know very well that I would rather have had an English lord for her; but there's no use fretting about it, and I will never forgive you as long as I live, if you refuse to give me down a good handsome sum of money out of your last night's winnings to buy the dear creature's wedding clothes. A good deal of it, I know, we may have on credit, but not all, nor anything like all. And, if you please, I want to set about it immediately."

"I have not the least objection in the world, my dear," replied Mr. O'Donagough; "and if you will be kind enough to hear what I was going to say—which has nothing whatever to do with Patty—you shall set out and buy the wedding clothes immediately after, if you like it."

Mrs. O'Donagough was too reasonable a woman to ask for a fairer promise than this, and accordingly she placed herself in the chair that her daughter had just before occupied, and replied—

"Now, then, Donny!" with the most sweet-tempered smile in the world.

"It is rather an awkward thing, my dear, that I have got to mention to you, and if you were not the devilish clever woman that you are, I should never tell you of it at all. But if you w

set your wit side by side with mine, I am not the least bit afraid but what we shall get through the business perfectly well, and do better, for what I know, than if it had never happened."

"And what *has* happened?" replied his wife, in an accent of considerable alarm.

"Why, first and foremost, that hideous old maid, Elizabeth Peters, hit off the truth last night as cleverly as if she had been the witch she looks like, and obligingly addressed me as Major Allen before Mrs. Stephenson, civilly requesting me to tell her why I had changed my name."

"Insolent wretch!—see if I won't be revenged of her impertinence," exclaimed the sympathising wife.

"And what did you say to her, my dear?"

"Why, my love, I had not time to say much, because that very fascinating personage, Mrs. Stephenson, and this above-mentioned Miss Elizabeth Peters, had politely concealed themselves behind the curtains of the recess, in order to watch me play piquet with Mr. Ronaldson. Foxcroft was in the room with us, and, good-natured fellow, as you know he is, he gave me, half in fun, you know, of course, a hint or two of the cards Ronaldson held—all which these charming ladies saw, and at the very moment when I was in the act of making so good a thing of it as would have made it signify but little whether Patty's Don were rich or poor, they peeped out of their hiding-place, and told Ronaldson not to sign the check, for that he had been *cheated*."

"Audacious wretches!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, her expressive countenance beaming with rage. "Oh, my dearest Donny! had I been there, they had dared not for their lives have done it. In your own house too!—when they were enjoying the protection of your roof, and revelling in the magnificence of your splendid hospitality! Surely it is unprecedented in the annals of visiting. They shall be exposed for it. They shall be known for what they are, or my name is not O'Donagough. Why, Donny, I shall never again be able to own my connection with them. They have disgraced themselves for ever!"

"All very true, my dear," replied her husband, composedly.

"But, nevertheless, Ronaldson did not *sign* the check—and I shall be obliged to leave the country with as little delay as possible."

"Leave the country? Leave Curzon-street? And just when I am going to show off my darling Patty everywhere, as the youngest and most beautiful married woman in London! Oh, it is impossible! You never can be such a brute!" cried the unhappy Mrs. O'Donagough, in the most piercing accents imaginable.

"You do not appear to see this affair with your usual clear-headed good sense, my dear," replied her husband, with exemplary gentleness of voice and manner. "Perhaps you are not aware that if I do not take myself off, and that immediately, the Secretary of State for the Home Department will have to do upon his own hands. But even in that case, you must

bridal gaieties would be equally defeated, for we should go, at least I should, and under the circumstances, I don't think you would find your residence here at all agreeable afterwards."

"What *do* you mean, Donny?" said the vexed lady, looking at his placid countenance with considerable indignation. "What have all the secretaries of state in the world to do with our staying in this beautiful house or leaving it? If you are only joking, and making fun of me, as you do with that fool Foxcroft, I never will forgive you as long as I live."

"That would be very terrible, my dear," he mildly replied. "But fortunately at this moment I run no risk of the kind; for I certainly do not consider the matter as partaking of the least degree of the nature of a joke. Nor do I see anything like fun in being transported for life."

"Transported!" shrieked Mrs. O'Donagough. "You don't mean it?—you don't mean to say, husband, that you have really been such a fool as to do anything to put you in the power of those horrid women? You don't mean to tell me *that*? Oh, Donny! Donny! I shall go mad!"

"God forbid, my dear," he replied, without varying a muscle of his truly philosophical physiognomy. "Anything of the kind would be exceedingly troublesome just now. But really, my dear, you agitate yourself much more than there is any occasion for; and to tell you the truth, I thought my Barnaby was too much a woman of the world to suffer such an occurrence as this to shake her courage so violently. If you will but see the thing in a proper light, and give me your assistance in getting everything ready, and in giving the whole affair rather the appearance of a party of pleasure, than anything else, I have no doubt that we shall do extremely well. There are many people of very high fashion in the United States, particularly at New Orleans, and in the other slave states, and if we contrive to manage our affairs *only* as well as we have done before, my dear, you may depend upon it we shall soon find ourselves in the very highest rank of society, and perhaps better off than we have ever been in our lives."

Mrs. O'Donagough was a woman of strong feelings, yet nevertheless she was always, or almost always, amenable to reason, and long before her husband had ceased speaking, her fine spirit had recovered its tone; she felt able, and perfectly willing too, to take the particular ball, which now appeared to face her, by the horns, and by the noble exercise of the faculties of which she felt proudly conscious, to do battle with whatever difficulties might assail her, nothing doubting, from the hints her judicious husband had thrown out, that her reward would now be, what it had so often been before, *namely*, the placing herself considerably in advance of all her fellow-creatures, the envied of many, and the admired of all. From this point the conversation proceeded in a tone of conjugal confidence and sympathy, that might have served as a model to all

the wedded sons and daughters of Eve; and no greater proof can be given of the happiness of such a self-contented temperament (as that of my heroine, than the fact, that the interview which brought to her knowledge the proof of her husband's standing in the most imminent peril of being transported for life, left her in a state of spirits the most animated and the most happy that can be conceived.

Just as she was going to take her departure, in order to set about her own preparations, and leave her husband at liberty to make his, she suddenly stopped short and exclaimed—"But, my dear Donny, what in the world am I to say to those dear, good Perkinses? and to that handsome creature, Tornornio? Upon my word, that must be thought of."

"It has been thought of, my Barnaby," returned her husband, with a playful smile that quite illuminated his countenance. "Patty will tell you; but no," he added, "it will be safest for me to give you a sketch of the thing myself, that you may make no blunders when you hear the dear child allude to it. Just listen to me my dear, and I will make you understand *why* it is that I am obliged to leave the country."

Mr. O'Donagough then, with some humour and very considerable enjoyment, ran over the heads of the history he had been recounting to Patty concerning his early passion, and, for a few gay moments felonies, fittings, transport-ships, and Botany Bay, were all forgotten, and both the gentleman and lady laughed heartily.

"There certainly never was anything like you, Donny!" said the lady, as soon as he had finished; "you have made my sides ache, I promise you."

"And there certainly never was anything like you, my dear," he replied, with a very gallant bow. "I have often told you that you were a wife made on purpose for me—and so you are."

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Mrs. O'Donagough re-entered the drawing-room, she found Patty and her husband seated upon one sofa, and the two Miss Perkinses on another. The two former were deeply engaged in a whispering conversation, the subject of which, as the well-satisfied mother rightly imagined, was those passages in the early history of the bride's father, with which she had that morning been made acquainted. The two latter did not appear to be conversing at all, and to say truth, looked very particularly forsaken and forlorn. *It was to this group that Mrs. O'Donagough immediately addressed herself, for she, too, felt a pleasure in the exercise of the inventive faculty, which was almost equal to that of her husband.*

"Oh, my dear girls!" she began, "what a history I have

listening to! such a story has come out! Mercy on me! I hardly know whether I stand on my head or my heels!"

"Oh, dear me! What is it?" cried Miss Louisa, divided between fright and curiosity, for Mrs. O'Donagough, by pressing her right hand strongly against her left side, sighing deeply, and casting up her eyes towards the ceiling, gave her great reason to fear that there was some mixture of the terrible in what she was about to hear.

"I dare say it is the same thing that my beloved Patty is communicating to her husband," said Miss Matilda, eagerly. "Do, dearest Mrs. O'Donagough, let me hear it directly. You must know how devotedly I am attached to you all, and whatever concerns any one of the dear family, is just the same to my poor heart, as if it belonged to myself."

"You are a good soul, Matilda, as ever lived, and so is Louisa too. So sit you down, one on each side of me, and you shall hear it; though I declare to heaven my hair actually stands on end upon my head at the very idea of repeating it."

Saying these words, Mrs. O'Donagough seated herself in the middle of her sofa, and taking in each of her own hands one of those belonging to Miss Louisa and to Miss Matilda Perkins, she began to repeat the history she had heard from her husband, embellishing it a little as she went on, by sundry feminine traits of impassioned tenderness on the part of the young countess, and concluding with a hint that the untimely demise of that noble personage was the consequence of her unconquerable passion for Mr. O'Donagough.

The only part of the history, as recounted by that gentleman to his daughter, which did not appear in the present version, was that which seemed to infer a possibility that Patty might be the offspring of the lady alluded to, and not of the fond mother who so gloried in calling her daughter. Mr. O'Donagough showed considerable knowledge of human nature in omitting this part of the joke when discoursing on the subject to his wife. He felt that there were things which might not safely be mentioned, even in jest, and that *this* was one of them. It would be difficult, nay, perhaps impossible, to find words capable of doing justice to the feelings of the Misses Perkins as they listened to this soul-stirring narrative. Disjointed expletives were all they could utter; but clasped hands, lifted eyes, and long-drawn breath, gave ample testimony to the powerful emotion which shook their respective frames. At length the predominating feeling of Miss Matilda found vent in words having some show of meaning, for she uttered distinctly the following:—

"And what, my adored Mrs. O'Donagough, is it your intention to do? Go, it is plain, you must—but where?"

"Oh! in such a case as this," replied my heroine, "there is but one country in the world that a superior-minded man, like Mr. O'Donagough, would think of for a moment. Of course we sh

go to the United States—that is, to the most fashionable part of the country. You may guess that I should not think of any other. And there I have no doubt we shall be exceedingly happy. O'Donagough is exactly the man to be popular in a free country. All his principles and ideas are upon the noblest and most extended scale; and I know that I and Patty, too, are particularly well fitted to live happily in a country where there are slaves; in fact it is the only sort of servant in whom one can find any real comfort, and I confess to you, my dear girls, that upon the whole, I expect we shall enjoy ourselves famously."

"I have not the least doubt in the world, my dearest friend!" exclaimed Miss Matilda. "I would to heaven I was going with you!"

"Then so you shall, by jingo!" exclaimed the bride, who had overheard the speech of her favourite. "If I say the word, it's as good as done; and that you know, Matilda—nobody better. If I had my way when I was plain Patty O'Donagough, I leave you to guess if I am likely to be disappointed, and contradicted, and plagued, and disobeyed *now* that I am a married woman, and the wife of a Don."

"Dearest Patty!—ever, ever the same!" cried Miss Matilda, with vehement emotion. "What say you, my dearest Mrs. O'Donagough? Do you think that we might be permitted to join your delightful party? I feel sure that both Louisa and myself would know no happiness like that of devoting ourselves to you."

"Upon my life, girls, I should like it of all things; for I am sure that I shall want somebody, particularly just at first, to talk to, and to help me to settle things. Of course, my dears, you know that you would have to pay all your own expenses—that's a matter of course—and then, if Donny does not object, I won't. But what does Louisa say to it? I have not heard her voice yet."

Upon being thus appealed to, Miss Louisa ventured to say, though her sister's eyes shot daggers at her the while, that she did not think either Matilda or herself young enough to venture upon going to a quite new country, of which they knew nothing, except that it was many a thousand of miles off, which would make it exceedingly difficult to come back again.

"Louisa Perkins! you are a fool, if ever there was one born!" exclaimed Madame Tornorino, "and you may say that I told you so."

Mrs. O'Donagough laughed aloud, and said—

"Go where you will, Patty, gentle and simple must all agree that you have a tongue in your head. But never mind her, Louisa. You have a right to your say as well as another, and your opinion is, that America is a great way off. So it is, my dear. And you need not mind Patty's impudence the least bit in the world."

Miss Louisa Perkins seemed to be of the same opinion, and certainly looked as if her equanimity was in no danger of being shaken by that lively lady's sallies. But her feelings were differently

stituted with respect to her sister; for when Miss Matilda, having seized upon her shawl, and wrapped it energetically round her said, "Come along, sister!" she really looked as white as a sheet.

"Yes, Matilda, you had better go away now, child," observed Mrs. O'Donagough, waving them off with her hand. "It is quite impossible that I can sit still to reason upon the subject, when I have such an immensity to do. You had better talk the matter over together. All I have to say is, that if you are ready to pay all your expenses, and like to go, I shall make no objection, if Donny makes none—and you know how excessively fond he is of you both!"

"God bless you, dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!" sighed Matilda, as she pressed the hand of her condescending friend. "Oh, how I should glory in waiting upon you like your humblest servant in any land in the world that you could take me to!"

"You are a very good girl, Matilda," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, "and I dare say Louisa will think better of it."

But Louisa continued to maintain her ominous aspect, and with a silent, slow, and melancholy step, followed her sister into the street.

The maiden sisters walked along Curzon-street, turned so as to reach Park-lane, crossed into the Park, and still without exchanging a single word. Louisa was melancholy—Matilda, moody. But having at length reached that semi-sylvan path which stretches across the green sward towards Brompton, the full heart of the younger sister swelled too vehemently to be longer restrained, and she uttered the following words:—

"If there is one misfortune in the world more hard to bear than all the rest, it is the being tied up to a person too old and too stupid for anything."

The meek-spirited Louisa, who knew that a storm must come, had been actually quivering, inside and out, from head to foot, in the expectation of it; and though the breeze that now began to whistle in her ears was not of the most balmy or gentle quality, she still felt in some sort relieved that it had begun, probably because the evils we anticipate are always more terrible in our imaginings than in the reality. It was, therefore, with a very perceptible attempt at a cheerful manner that she replied—

"Come, dear Matilda! don't fret yourself! You can't think how it spoils your good looks. And besides, my dear sister, you ought to remember that if two people *are* tied together, as you call it, the one young and the other old, the one clever and the other stupid, the clever and young one has so much the best of it, that she ought to thank God day and night that she is not the other one."

"It is much that I have to thank God for, isn't it?" bitterly replied the unfortunate *cadette*—"I, that never do, never can, and never shall, I suppose, have any one single thing that I wish for! Whatever you say, Louisa, I must beg that you will not be so dis-

gustingly hypocritical as to pretend to tell me I am not unhappy. Oh! I am miserable!"

"I do believe you are, my poor dear Matilda," returned the elder, her eyes filling with tears, "and that it is which prevents my being so perfectly happy as the goodness of God ought to make me; for to tell you the truth, I don't a bit mind being old and stupid—because I have got used to it, I suppose. But I *do* mind seeing you fret, and pine and take on so, and all because nobody just happens to come in the way for you to be married to."

"Don't speak of that, if you please. You had much better let that subject alone," interrupted Matilda, in accents as little soothing as it is easy to imagine. "Unless, indeed, you *wish* to torture me, which may very likely be the case; and if so, you cannot do better than go on."

"Oh! Matilda! Matilda! how can you speak so? I never in my whole life wished to do anything in the world but please you. And God knows, I love you quite as dearly as I do myself, or I might say *better*, and that without telling any fib, for I would always a great deal rather have you pleased than be pleased myself: and, be as angry as you will with me, Matilda, you cannot say it is my fault that you are not married yet."

"Not say it is your fault?" screamed Matilda, suddenly standing still, and turning round so as to throw a broadside of indignant eye-beams under the bonnet of her suffering sister; "*not* your fault? That passes by far anything that I could have thought it possible for a human being to utter! Not your fault that I am not married! And who was it then, if you please, who prevented my being at this very moment Mrs. Foxcroft? I can bear anything better than falsehood, Miss Louisa Perkins. And, therefore, I will just beg you, as a favour, never to say that again."

"Glad and glad shall I be to leave off saying anything that you don't like to hear, Matilda; but sometimes I don't find out what it is till too late. We will never talk any more about Mr. Foxcroft then. It is the best resolution we can take, for we know he is a bad man, and not worth anybody's talking about."

"And *that* I suppose you say to please me too, knowing as you do, cruel, hard-hearted creature, that I still dote upon him to distraction!" replied Matilda, in violent agitation. "Poor, poor Foxcroft!" she added, while the embroidered pocket-handkerchief which she carried was raised to her eyes; "how different would now have been your fate had you fallen into other hands. His only fault under heaven was the excess of his love for me. His fond heart shrunk from the idea of seeing me living upon an income that he thought unworthy of my taste and refinement, and for *this*, and this only, you lacerate my soul, by making me listen to your eternal abuse of him."

"Indeed I am very sorry to hear you are so much in love with him still," returned her sister; "and rather than that, I ~~do~~ think, my dear, that it is better to remind you of what you heard yourself

you know; I mean his wanting so very much to marry me for the sake of my little fortune."

"He never wanted to marry you," replied the indignant Matilda. "You totally mistook his meaning—I am sure of it. All his object was to endeavour to soften your heart towards me, and persuade you, if it was possible, into fairly dividing your fortune between us. And this you have chosen to twist and turn into his offering to marry you. But this is only of a piece with all the rest. You were born to tyrannise over me, and destroy me, and nothing is left for me but to submit. Oh! how often," she added, with a deep groan, and casting her eyes upon the Serpentine River, which they were at that moment passing, "how often do I long to plunge into that placid water, and bury my misery in it for ever."

Miss Matilda Perkins had certainly, during her thirty-six years of existence, tried pretty nearly every species of device for the management and subjugation of her truly affectionate elder sister; but somehow or other, it had never before occurred to her that she might threaten suicide; and now it was probably only the opportune sight of the water which had suggested the idea. But whatever the cause, she speedily felt inclined to bless the effect; for never before had she, even in her most energetic moments of eloquence, uttered words productive of such powerful results. Miss Louisa turned as pale as ashes, and trembled visibly in every limb; she clutched the arm of her sister with convulsive strength, and hurried her onward, though literally without the power of speaking a single word.

The effect of her experiment was not lost on Miss Matilda; she attempted not to break the really awful silence which now reigned between them, but suffered her sister to drag her onward unresistingly till they had reached their own door. The knocker was made to do its office, but still they spoke not, and the door being opened, they mounted, Miss Matilda first, and Miss Louisa afterwards, to their drawing-room. There the really miserable elder sister seated herself, and burst into tears. The younger permitted them to flow for some minutes uninterruptedly, assuming meanwhile herself what she intended should be an aspect of dogged despair. At length, the poor Louisa endeavoured to rally; she drew off her gloves, and tidily rolled them up; then removed her shawl from her shoulders, and began a similar notable process upon it, smoothing and folding it upon her knee, but certainly looking all the time as miserable as it was well possible to be. Matilda watched her closely; and perceiving that, notwithstanding her melancholy, she was gradually recovering from the shock she had received, and returning too nearly to the usual sensations of daily existence, she took off her bonnet, which she threw down (notwithstanding it had a new feather in it) with an air highly theatrical, shook back her ringlets, stood up, approached her sister, placed herself immediately before her, and thus addressed her—

"*Louisa!*—The time is come when it is absolutely necessary

that we should understand one another. The existence I have been leading under your care and control, has become much to painful to endure, and I have come at length to the firm determination of changing or of ending it. The choice, Louisa, as to whether I shall make some effort to lessen the misery I endure, or ~~rather~~ MYSELF, I shall leave wholly to you. If you will immediately, readily, and cheerfully consent to accompany our friends, the O'Donagoughs, to America, I will consent to live, and will exert myself to the very utmost to render existence to both of us as happy in the new world than it has ever been in the old. But if you refuse this, if you persist in keeping me chained to this sterile land, where the best and tenderest feelings of the human heart are checked and blighted by the constant fear of not having money enough to marry upon—if, I say, you do this, instead of permitting me to try my chance in a new world, I solemnly declare to you, that I will put an end to my life; and when the awful deed is done, you may learn, too late, the danger of torturing the human soul beyond its powers of endurance. Now then, Louisa, speak! Decide! I abide your decision, and you must abide its consequences!"

Inexpressibly terrified at these dreadful words, the unhappy Louisa was ready to grant all and everything that was demanded of her; and eagerly throwing her arms round the tall, thin figure of her sister, as she stood before her, she exclaimed—

"Upon one condition, Matilda, I agree to everything. You shall go, we will both go whenever and wherever you will, if you will only make me one promise."

"Name it," said Matilda, eagerly.

"Only promise me, my dearest sister, that if I consent to your wishes in this, you will never think of killing yourself. Not even if you should not happen to get any gentleman to marry you in America."

"I promise," responded Matilda, solemnly.

Louisa exclaimed, "Thank God!" but the next moment heaved a heavy sigh. Whether this was caused by the remembrance of her own promise, or breathed as a relief from the fulness of joy occasioned by that of her sister, may be doubtful. But be this as it may, the business was settled. Matilda, in a cheerful voice, reminded her sister that a gentleman who had the eye of all the state authorities fixed upon him, like Mr. O'Donagough, would not be permitted to linger long after receiving notice that he was to go. And having given this necessary hint, she instantly set to work herself upon drawers and boxes, and by the vigorous earnestness of her labours, gave the strongest proof of the vivacity of the feelings which prompted them.

It is needless to follow the preparations of the party thus about to leave England together for the United States; suffice it to say, that every one of them, including Don ~~Barbosa~~ Tornorino, was so active and expert in the several of

were called upon to perform, that in less than a week their passage was taken in a fine ship lying in the river and bound for New Orleans, their goods packed and on board, their various affairs, agencies, and respective money concerns satisfactorily settled, and one and all of them perfectly ready to go on board.

The above-mentioned Don, indeed, though hitherto so slightly known to the reader, and rather to be considered as a stranger than an old acquaintance, will be found hereafter to possess many noble qualities, well deserving a share in the affectionate feelings, which I flatter myself his companions have already excited. The only circumstance preliminary to their sailing, which it is farther necessary to mention, is, that the principal personage, and he who was considered on all sides as the hero of the expedition, decided, after giving a good deal of consideration to the subject, that for many reasons, into which it is totally unnecessary to enter, it would be advisable that he should not appear in America under either of his former appellations; but, as a still farther compliment to his ever-admired wife, they should assume the style and title of Major and Mrs. ALLEN BARNABY.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mind of a passenger on board a merchant-vessel working her way up the Thames, with very little wind, and that little not above half favourable, must be exceedingly preoccupied if he do not find this part of his expedition very long and very dull. But notwithstanding the great variety of temperament by which the various individuals of the party we are about to accompany were distinguished, there was not one of them who, strictly speaking, could be said to suffer from this evil.

Miss Louisa Perkins, indeed, might, to a superficial observer, have been classed as one of the above-named victims of a slow progress through a disagreeable region. But though her pale, thin visage had no more movement or animation in it than that of a whitening boiled yesterday, though her very light-gray eyes had a plentiful lack of speculation in them, and though she spoke not and moved not, I, who have the happy privilege of knowing every thought of her heart, take upon me to declare that no idea that the river was long or dull ever entered her head. She was there, poor thing, seated on the pea-green bench, formed by the top of the chicken-coop, on purpose to be miserable. Not that her temper was of that sour quality which leads its possessor to find an indulgence in being uncontrolledly cross; on the contrary, the temper of Miss Louisa was essentially gentle and kind; but this gentleness and this kindness had led her on the present occasion to do precisely the very thing that she most abhorred, and, in truth, *she could hardly choose* but be miserable. She hated every country

and everything that was not English. and everything that was American, most of all she loathed the smell of a ship, she detested the sea, and had never been in a boat to cross a ferry without being *rather* sick. And to add to all this, she greatly doubted the efficacy of their present scheme for remedying the staple misery of her sister's existence, that is to say, she greatly doubted the probability of finding an American gentleman more inclined to marry a young lady of six-and-thirty without money than an English one. So that, on the whole, it was hardly possible that she could be otherwise than sad; her only comfort, as she gazed upon the dirty water through which the vessel was crawling, being the reflection that she had saved her sister from jumping into some very like it.

As to the hero of the party—as I have already very fitly designated Major Allen Barnaby—he stood in a manly and commanding attitude; his arms a-kimbo, and his legs “a-straddle,” in the style of one of the *Sieur David's* classic Greeks, sometimes looking ahead, sometimes looking astern, but always with an air of consciousness that the bark which bore him and his fortunes carried no ordinary freight. The river was neither long nor dull to him—could he forget how he last navigated in the same direction?—could he forget how much he had added to his little hoard since he passed up it in the other?—could he fail to feel that his glorious intellect and his happy star had enabled him again and again to rise triumphant out of misfortunes, which must have overwhelmed a man of lesser genius? And remembering all this, could he do otherwise than look forward with bold hope and unshrinking confidence to the fresh career that was opening before him? To him the tedious river voyage was but a soothing interval, during which he could indulge, without interruption or restraint, in a series of exciting calculations and a succession of reveries, each bringing flatteringly before his mind's eye the immense superiority of the new world over the old in all the *arts* of a highly advanced state of society, and a complacent smile settled on his features as he thought of it.

Mrs. O'Donagough, to do her justice, seldom felt anything to be tedious; she could always find or make opportunities for displaying both her mind and body to advantage: and who that does this, can ever find any portion of existence fatiguing? Before the ship reached the Downs, she had made pretty nearly every sailor on board, as well as the captain and the three mates, understand that she knew very nearly as much about a ship as they did; that—besides all the personal beauty which remained to her (and she really managed to take off ten years of her fifty-five much better than the generality of those who try their talents at the *same* operation), besides all that remained—she clearly made them all understand that she had, some few years ago, been infinitely handsomer still. To the cook she gave some admirable hints in ship cookery. On the mind of the steward she strongly!

the necessity of furnishing the passengers, particularly the ladies, with a liberal allowance of *good* toddy if he wished to keep them from the horrors of sea-sickness; and she made the little black cabin-boy thoroughly understand that, if ever he hoped to see the colour of her money, he must never fail to come to her whenever she called, let who would want him elsewhere. With all this to be done, could she find the river voyage too long?

As to Don Tornorino and his lady, they had both mutually and separately much to amuse them. The gentleman had very many reasons for feeling himself happy and contented, and truly he was so; but to what an extent no one can guess who is unacquainted with his previous history, and as his fate is now so closely united to that of the amiable race to whose memoirs I am thus sedulously devoting myself, a slight sketch of his early life may be desirable.

As I pique myself upon the unvarnished truth of my narratives, I shall honestly confess to the reader that Don Espartero *et cætera* Tornorino was not by birth an hidalgo; on the contrary, indeed, his mother was a washerwoman and his father a tailor. But in a country where the wholesome exercise of revolution is going on so prosperously as it has been long doing in Spain, it matters little what a man's father may be, provided he himself knows how to profit by the delightful whirlwind of accidents by which he is sure to be surrounded.

The young Tornorino was a very pretty boy, and he was a sharp boy; and moreover he was a very musical boy; and by the help of all these good gifts together, there were few youngsters in that not very tranquil country who had so pleasant a life. He was very religious, too, and all the priests that were left in Madrid made much of him. He both danced and sung to perfection, and Juan Christino delighted in him.

Several seamstresses were willing to make him shirts for nothing; and there was not a cook's shop in the city, that had a woman in any part of the establishment, where he might not get the very best of dinners for the asking. Besides all this, his excellent and patriotic father had become a *chef-d'escadron* to some faction or other, I really forget what, and his mother, lady of the bedchamber to her Majesty; so that his position in society appeared as assured as it was brilliant, and a happier young Don never strutted through the highways and byways of Madrid than the young raven-haired Tornorino.

All this lasted till he was twenty-four years old and three months, and then, poor fellow, just as he had got confirmed in every habit of extravagance, luxury, and indulgence, he was literally turned from the court into the gutter. His father was shot as a traitor, having very unluckily been caught in the fact of appropriating some small regimental funds that happened to come in his way. His mother was discarded from her high and very distinguished office, and a young milliner installed in her place; and the *poor petted son, for no reason in the world that I know of, save*

that he had outlived the royal lady's favour, was also informed that his attendance was no longer required. The unfortunate widow of the gallant *chef-d'escadron* died of starvation within the year, and her accomplished son sold eleven of his twelve guitars, all his gold snuff-boxes, and five of his six sword-knots, in order to convey himself to England, and try his fortune there.

And a dismal fortune it proved, poor fellow! As soon as the few naps he had brought with him had disappeared, he tried a greater variety of expedients to get more than I have time to record. Among other things he played in the orchestra at Drury Lane, and danced in the ballets at Covent Garden—he gave lessons in most living languages to all who would be so kind as to learn, and offered to teach the guitar for a shilling a lesson.

But somehow or other nothing succeeded with him. He was almost always taking a siesta when he ought to have been rehearsing at the theatre; and he no sooner got a pupil than he began making love to the mother or the sister, and so got kicked into the street. Then every farthing of money he got he was obliged to spend at some Leicester-square restaurant where he could obtain a *pistole* two, seasoned with a little garlic, for he felt as if he really must die if he attempted to swallow a chop or a steak prepared for him at his lodgings. But after all, there was really as little harm in him as could reasonably have been expected under the circumstances; and amongst the multitudinous patriots with which London abounds, Patty might easily have done worse.

The variety of pleasant thoughts which now chased each other through the young man's head as he sat beside his bride, quietly and smilingly receiving and returning her caresses, was perfectly delightful. By far the most distinguishing feature of his mind was a love of ease, and, indeed, of indulgence of all kinds, and this had made the privations endured since reaching England something almost too dreadful to think of. His reverence for the father and mother of his young wife knew no bounds. He saw that their manner of living was exceedingly far removed (as far at least as he could judge of it) from dry mutton-chops, hard beef-steaks, black cold potatoes, and muddy beer. These various articles had formed a large portion of his misery for the last four years; and the idea that he was now to live daintily (comparatively speaking) and do no work, wrapped his senses in a sort of sweet *elysium* that kept him in a continual smile. Moreover, he loathed, hated, and abominated the climate of England to a degree, that made the act of sailing away from it something little short of rapture. He was going to see the sun again! The very name of New Orleans, whenever it reached his ears, caused him to display his well-set white teeth to an unmitigated excess; and so perfectly well satisfied was he with his present position, that had Queen Christina stood before him, he would have snapped his fingers at her, and would hardly have consented to change it, had the great general's name he had assumed offered his own to him instead.

As for Patty—nobody who knows Patty could doubt for a moment her being in a state of perfect felicity; for in spite of Jack and all his false-heartedness she was married, and instead of having one kiss to talk about, she had now more than she could count, and the river seemed to her a very pleasant river, the wind, a very good wind, and the ship, a very nice ship.

But of all this happy, well-contented party, the most supremely happy, and the most rapturously well-contented was beyond all question Miss Matilda Perkins. The annoyances that the Don was leaving behind him were light indeed compared to the various and for-ever recurring sources of agony which had lacerated her tender bosom for years.

Never, perhaps, had any woman loved so often and so devotedly! Oh! she felt to the very centre of her soul that she deserved to be loved again, and the having failed of this well-merited reward, and that too through at least twenty years of unremitting though various affection, had left a bitterness of indignation at her heart, which poisoned all her hours, and rendered her life one mournful, long-drawn, love-lorn sigh. But now, how delightfully was all around her changed! What a rainbow radiance fell upon every thought of the future.

Hope sprang aloft upon exulting wings;

the bark that supported her slight figure, as she gracefully leaned over the taffrail, seemed wafted by breezes from heaven, and its sails filled by the soft sweet breath of love.

Miss Matilda was, in her way, a great reader; she had dipped into several accounts of America, and she was quite aware how exceedingly the natives were behind-hand in all matters of grace and fashion. What an enormous advantage, therefore, would this give her over all the native daughters of the land! How certain did she feel that her knowledge of life, her elegant manners, her particularly small waist, and two or three new bonnets and dresses which she had bought at the bazaar two days before she set off, would place her in a position of immeasurable superiority above everybody that she was at all likely to be seen with! In short, her swelling heart felt no fears for the result; and the only thing approaching anxiety which crossed her mind was the question whether it would be best for her to accept the first man that offered, or wait a little to take the advantage of choice.

Miss Matilda certainly did not mean to assimilate herself to a housemaid; nevertheless, having a general idea that a certain letter concerning Australia, which she had heard greatly admired, was somehow or other about America, she could not but recall with interest the historical fact therein mentioned, which records that marriageable females arriving from the motherland were so eagerly sought in wedlock there, that proposals were made to them as they approached the land through speaking-trumpets. Had this circumstance been recalled to the mind of Miss Matilda as one which had

influenced her wish to leave England, it is highly probable that she would have rejected the suggestion with disdain, and have declared herself not such a fool as to take for earnest what was perhaps written in jest.

It is, however, unquestionably certain that there had been moments in the course of the last ten years of Miss Matilda Perkins's existence, during which this graphic image of abounding husbands had returned again and again to her fancy, throwing a sort of El Dorado halo around the name of America, which had not been without its effect.

"I know it is put down there most likely in the way of a joke," she had one day said to herself, in musing monologue; "but for all that, I dare say it means something. There is no fire without smoke." And Miss Matilda looked at the map.

But how could her wildest dreams at that time have painted the possibility of her ever traversing such a world of water? Yet here she was, beyond the possibility of a doubt, actually embarked on board a ship bound to America! The fact was so extraordinary, so astounding, so delightful, that sometimes it seemed to transcend all reasonable belief, and at others to elevate her spirits almost beyond the power of restraining them within proper limits. Such a delightful party too! Her *most* particular friend, a young married woman! proverbially the best of chaperons! And then, her husband so fond of her! Such happiness between them! continually suggesting to every one who saw them the dear idea of matrimony, as the easiest and surest mode of attaining perfect felicity! Can we wonder that the soul of Miss Matilda was swimming in bliss, as buoyantly as the ship was swimming upon the waters?

And thus they made their way down "the majestic bosom of the Thames;" the only grumbling observation proceeding from the lips of poor Louisa. And that was not much; she only muttered to herself—"It is a long lane, they say, that has no turning; but, oh dear! it is a longer still that has got so many."

CHAPTER VII.

WE will not a second time follow the O'Donagough—henceforth the BARNABY—family step by step, or rather knot by knot, across the Atlantic. After a safe and not particularly long passage, they arrived at the Balize, and being placed under the towage of a steamboat, began to make their way up the lordly, but gloomy-tempered Mississippi.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Major Allen Barnaby—for it was *thus* he now commanded himself to be constantly designated—"thank God!" he exclaimed, as he sprang on shore on the handsome quay of New Orleans. "We have had a terrible *sage*; but I am not sorry it's over."

"We are none of us sorry it's over, I dare say," replied his portly lady, as soon as she had recovered her balance upon first finding both her feet once more on *terra firma*. "We are the very luckiest creatures upon God's earth, that's certain, major. How the sun shines, don't it."

The facility with which it was probable "Mrs. Barnaby" would fall again into her old habit of calling her husband "major," had, in truth, been one reason why her John William Patrick Allen O'Donagough Barnaby had chosen to assume that title in preference to every other—and the scheme answered completely;—for so naturally did she resume this appellation, endeared to her doubtless by the remembrance of the early days of her love, that from that time forward she was never known to blunder when addressing him, excepting that now and then at the name of Allen, which he had slipped in before that of Barnaby, as if to identify himself, she would come to a full stop.

"And now, captain," said the restored major, "can you lend us a lad just to take these few light articles that the custom-house gentlemen have done with, and show us the way to the boarding-house you were talking about."

"Cæsar, cabin-boy, shall go along with ye," replied the captain. "Only I'm thinking that Madam Carmichael will hardly, it may be, have place enough to put you all up, and without notice given too. But for all that, you had best go to her and say I sent you. She'll be able, I expect, to get some of ye lodged out of the house if there is not room in it."

The whole party amounting, as we know, to half a dozen, were by this time collected in a knot, and ready to start. On the whole, perhaps, they did not present a very elegant *coup-d'œil*, but it is rarely that any ladies appear to advantage on arriving from a voyage. Yet they had all, save the poor, worn-out Miss Louisa, done the best they could towards restoring their appearance. Mrs. Barnaby had liberally refreshed her rouge, and put on a clean collar—but her "front" was sadly out of repair, being, in fact, entirely worn out, and permitting her copious locks of dappled gray to peep forth in various places from amidst the scanty sable, with which it was her object to conceal them. Madame Tornorino, however, certainly looked a great deal handsomer than she ever did before in the whole course of her life, for she was almost pale, and considerably thinner than before her voyage; but her costume was anything but in good repair, and she had *not*, like her mamma, thought it necessary to put on a clean collar. The hopeful, ardent-minded Matilda, was unhappily thinner than ever, and so pal that as she turned her eyes from her own cheeks, as shown to her once at a time in the useful little glass set at the back of her hair-brush, as she turned her eyes from those pale cheeks to the glowing bloom on those of Mrs. Barnaby, she suddenly and secretly came to the resolution, that for the future she would herself (in a moderate way) *take advantage of the aid which nature, with her usual provider*

kindness, has prepared for the fading carnations of females of delicate constitution. For the present, however, this was out of her power, as Mrs. Barnaby's rouge was always looked up; but she thought that at the present moment she should lose little by the gold delicacy, which, in consideration of her long voyage, could not but be interesting. She therefore gave all the care that circumstances would permit to other decorations. For how was it possible she could tell *who* she might see? Not only did she put on a clean collar, but a clean cap too; yet she suffered her hair to fall somewhat too languidly on each side of her face, for it was *not* out of curl. But oh! how she pitied poor dear Mrs. Barnaby for having all her beautiful hair turning gray! and how heartily she thanked heaven in her heart of hearts, that not even her sister Louisa had a gray hair, which plainly showed it was not in the family, and gave her the most charming hope for her own future. So her *peruque* cap, with its pale pink bows, was set very far back on her head, and the bonnet which was lightly placed upon it had quite the air of a *chapeau de jolie femme*. The two gentlemen, also, had somewhat refreshed their toilets, in compliment to the character given of Mrs. Carmichael by her friend the captain, which was, that she was as first-rate a lady as any in the place, and "unaccountable smart to be sure."

With a light truck to convey such baggage as they were permitted to take from the ship, before the Custom-house had done its duty, the young negro, Cæsar, moved on before them, and the party followed under a broiling sun to the boarding-house.

Excepting Don Tornorino, who luxuriated in the warmth like a humming-bird, the whole set felt ready to lie down and expire before they had traversed half the distance they had to go. But as the major strode resolutely on without finching, the four ladies felt that they must stride resolutely on too, and they did so with a degree of enduring patience that did them honour. Fortunately, on arriving at the house of Mrs. Carmichael, they were desired to "walk into the keeping-room;" had they been turned from the door, the most of them felt quite certain that they should not have lived to reach another.

It is almost worth while, however, to endure the *fervid* heat of a southern climate, for the sake of enjoying the delicious device by which the ingenuity of that very clever creature, man, contrives to quench its terrors, and turn its very torment into luxury.

The apartment into which Mrs. Carmichael's negro footman showed the panting Europeans, was a room of some forty feet long, by twenty wide, and lofty in proportion. The expansive floor was covered by cool-looking matting, and round the walls were ranged a variety of sofas, formed for lounging in every possible attitude of Louisianian indolence. Four ample windows opened like sliding-doors upon a balcony, rendered almost imperious to the light, by being on all sides surrounded by Venetian blinds; and within the room stood one or two enormous decanters.

lumps of ice floating in them; tumblers of all sizes, about a dozen lemons, and abundance of sugar; while under the table stood a basket-covered flask of whisky, of a goodly size; a dozen or two of light cane-bottomed chairs were scattered about the room, lying upon many of which, as well as upon the tables and sofas, were a multitude of large feather-fans, the profusion of which might have struck the strangers as a whimsical peculiarity, had not their obvious utility been so very strongly felt.

"My goodness gracious, what a heavenly place!" cried Patty, instantly taking possession of a sofa, throwing herself at full length upon it, and seizing upon the largest fan within her reach. "By your leave, ladies," she added, taking off her bonnet, and tossing it upon the ground, "married women, you know, are always permitted to take liberties."

"What a blessing, to be sure, to come into a room like this, after such a walk," said Mrs. Barnaby, carefully wiping her face, so as to remove as little of her rouge by the operation as possible. "I hope to goodness, major, we arn't to stay in this horrid climate long. However, as long as we *do* stay, we can't be better off than here, so you must loosen your purse-strings, if you please, if it should prove that the elegant lady the captain told us of happens to be rather upish in her prices."

"We'll see about that, my dear," replied her husband. "It will be a great object, to be sure, to get into a place where one can breathe. But money is money, remember, in America as well as in England."

"Il rappelle," said the delighted Spaniard, "the soft atmosphere of Madrid."

"I am sure they must be a most delightful people," cried Matilda, who, though not a married woman, had ventured to follow the example of Patty, and was both lying down and fanning herself without ceremony. "How irresistibly," said she, "all this seems to suggest ideas of—in short, I am certain it must be a most domestic country from the evident care taken to make home agreeable."

As usual, poor Louisa spoke not. Indeed, she had hardly done so since she had left her native land, but gently, unobtrusively, and apart, she groaned.

And now a sound was heard as of the approach of slippers too large for the wearer's feet, and kept on by dint of shoving them onwards at each step, without venturing to raise them from the ground, and then the voice of hard and difficult breathing was perceptible, and then the door of entrance was darkened from side to side, as if a feather bed, exactly not too large to be pushed through it, was being thrust into the room. Of course, the twelve eyes of the new-comers were all turned towards the object thus appearing before them, and notwithstanding the obscurity of the apartment, they one and all very soon became convinced that huge and shapeless as was the approaching mass, it was nevertheless a *human being*, and moreover a woman.

"Smart," murmured Patty, in a voice not quite audible to the panting dame, "what could that fool of a captain mean?" And certainly, in Patty's acceptance of the word, his application of it might seem strange enough.

The person of Mrs. Carmichael, the dimensions of which were, seen in whatever direction she could be placed, very nearly six feet by four, was not only enormous in size, but so astonishingly out of all ordinary shape, as to make it no easy matter to clothe it at all. It is not very surprising, therefore, considering the prodigious bulk of every limb, whereby every movement became a labour, that Mrs. Carmichael should get into her clothes with as little labour and pains as possible. And then the heat! Poor Mrs. Carmichael suffered dreadfully from the heat, and certainly cared greatly less how her draperies looked in the eyes of others, than how they felt to herself. So her enormous white calico gown, with its colossal hanging sleeves, was fastened so loosely in the front by one single pin, as to create perpetual alarm in the bystanders, as to the stability of the investiture by which this very important portion of her covering was attached. There was, indeed, what might have been about a yard square of pink gauze loosely tucked in around the bust; but even this depended for its adhesion to the same foremost pin, and without it must have floated away into air still thinner than itself.

Notwithstanding the immensity of Mrs. Carmichael's person, it was not, as in the case of a preternaturally-expansive oak-tree, the result of advanced age, every year of which had added to its bulk. All the fat which had thus miraculously found a resting-place on the bones of Mrs. Carmichael, had been considerably less than forty years in collecting itself together, and had her face been finished by one chin, instead of three, and the rest of her features in less evident danger of being smothered, she would have been far from ill-looking. Excepting the pink gauze and the white robe already described, with the probable garment under it, together with her large slippers, and probable stockings, she was as much without the foreign aid of ornament as Eve herself. Stays she had none; she wore nothing on her head; nor was there the slightest reason whatever to suppose that she was embarrassed by anything more in the way of clothing than what has already been described.

Excepting the hard breathing, and an occasional ejaculation expressive of fatigue from moving, Mrs. Carmichael uttered nothing for several minutes after she entered the apartment. Having at length made her way to the part of the room where Major Allen Barnaby stood fanning himself, she dropped down upon a large cane chair, without any arms, every part of which, back and all, became so completely invisible, that she seemed to have perched herself on a three-legged stool—having thus deposited her person, she fixed her soft eyes on the major's face, and seemed to expect that he should speak first. But her heavy breathing gave ~~her~~ much the appearance of being, as yet, unfit for any exertion.

her visitor was too polite to address her, and it was therefore Mrs. Carmichael herself who at last opened the conversation.

"What is your pleasure, sir?" said she, in a voice which, notwithstanding her want of breath, was harmonious, though somewhat drawling.

"I have called, madam," he replied, "at the request of our friend Captain Tims, to inquire whether you can accommodate our party with board and lodging."

Mrs. Carmichael eyed the numerous group very complacently.

"For the whole kit of you, sir?" she demanded, with a smile as sweet as it was possible a smile could be from lips so overwhelmed by cheeks.

"Yes, madam, for all of us."

"And for a goodish spell, sir?"

"Very likely, madam; but that must depend on circumstances."

"Of course, sir, of course. Well then, I don't know—I rather expect I might make it convene, provided any two of the ladies could lie together."

The two Miss Perkinses exclaimed at the same moment, "Oh, we can do that, ma'am, quite well."

"Well now I calculate it might be done then; but in course you'll be wanting to see the rooms before you agree; and that's what Black Jessy can do for you."

And so saying, she clapped her great soft hands together, and though the sound thus produced was rather a dumb one, it sufficed to bring a smart-looking negress into the room, who having received sufficient orders from her mistress, stepped lightly and not ungracefully forward to do her bidding, turning her face towards the strangers, and displaying her white teeth, as an invitation to them to follow her.

This the "whole kit" did, though with some reluctance, perhaps at being obliged to put themselves in motion again. But the great large house was really as cool as it was possible a New Orleans house in the month of July could be, and they could hardly fail of being satisfied with the well ventilated rooms, clean mosquito bars and handsome wardrobes, which were displayed to them.

"This will do, major, capital, won't it?" said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, in high good humour.

"Yes, my dear; if you will undertake to pay for it," he replied.

"Don't come with any of that sort of nonsense over me, Donny," she replied, forgetting herself for a moment. "I am not going to begin the old Sydney way over again, I promise you. You'll remember, my dear, that I am a little more up to your doings than I was then; and if I give you the assistance of my talents, and keep you up with my respectability and fashion, I shall expect to be comfortably lodged in return, I promise you."

This was, however, all conjugally whispered in the ear of her husband, as they stood apart together for a moment, in a room the

was decidedly the "biggest and the best," and which both of them had tacitly selected as their own.

"We shall see, my dear, we shall see," he replied, without displaying any marks of anger at her remonstrance; "but you know as well as I do that everything must depend upon the chance of finding people that will suit us."

"Of course, dear, of course. But take my word for it, major, that you will do nothing to signify, either here or anywhere else; if you don't carry it with a high hand at first, and make them understand that you are somebody."

"You are not far wrong there, my dear; and now let us go down again to our Fatima. By the way, this New Orleans beauty makes you look as slender as a girl, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby."

Some thought of the same kind had already passed through the analytical head of Mrs. Allen Barnaby herself, and she felt so kindly disposed towards the person who could produce so agreeable an effect, that the negotiation which followed their return to the keeping-room, was speedily brought to a happy termination.

Poor Miss Louisa Perkins started a little at hearing that she was to pay ten dollars a week for herself and her sister; but permitted herself to be satisfied upon Mrs. Carmichael's proposing to abate one, provided the ladies did not mind sleeping in rather a small room up stairs that looked towards the west.

All preliminaries being thus happily settled, the party gladly accepted their obliging hostess's invitation to take possession of the keeping-room and its sofas, till such time as the arrival of their baggage should enable them to settle themselves in their own apartments, and get ready for dinner; the hour for which, she informed them, was five o'clock.

It was now nearly two, and some natural anxiety began to be expressed by the ladies, lest those ever precious objects of interest, their trunks, might not arrive in time.

And now it was that, for the first time, Patty's Demogorgon evidence that it was possible he might be of some little use; for upon Major Allen Barnaby's declaring that he neither could nor would go out again during the heat of the day, for all the trunks in the world, the young Spaniard declared that the man was delightful to him, and having received the most distinct instructions from each particular lady, as to which particular box it was especially essential he should get released for her INSTANTLY, he set off upon his mission, and performed it so well, that by four o'clock the whole party were made supremely happy, by finding themselves in the full enjoyment of their unpacked treasures, and as well able to make themselves fine as if they had never left London.

CHAPTER VIII.

At five o'clock precisely an immense dinner-bell sent its startling sound through every apartment of Mrs. Carmichael's establishment, but lest the uninitiated strangers might not immediately be aware what the sound meant, a brace of negro-girls was sent by the attentive hostess, to tell them that "every body was done finished dressing, and gone down to dinner."

This notice came in welcome time to everybody, except Miss Matilda; but she, poor dear young lady, had failed in no less than three different head-dresses, which she had attempted to arrange with a peculiarly novel effect; and having listened unmoved to her sister's repeated entreaties to "make haste, and not to mind just this first day," and so forth, she was at length obliged to tear herself from her looking-glass, at the bidding of Black Jessy, with half her lank ringlets tucked back, because they would not curl, after being so long trifled with in the fervid atmosphere of Mrs. Carmichael's west room. She was, however, comforted with the consciousness that her dress "sat like wax," and that her tight sleeves made her look uncommonly young. With such elasticity of step as this dear thought sufficed to give her, she preceded her quiet sister down stairs, being ushered into the dining-room by Jessy, just as about eighteen ladies and gentlemen, with Mrs. Carmichael at their head, had taken their places at table.

Some little bustle followed this tardy entrance; but this over, the business of the hour began—a business which in every party varies according to the individual character of those who compose it. Some, as usual, thought most of the nature of what was put upon the table to eat, and others of the nature of those who sat round the table to eat it. Eight out of the twelve of Mrs. Carmichael's previous boarders, were gentlemen, a preponderance highly agreeable to most of the new-comers.

Don, or *Monsieur Tornorino*, as Mrs. Carmichael called him, cared not a straw about the matter, nor would Miss Louisa have paid more attention to it than he did, had it not been that she knew her "poor dear Matilda" would be pleased; a conviction which rendered her pleased too.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby always confessed, that on the whole, she greatly preferred the society of gentlemen to that of ladies. Patty, in this, appeared likely through life to follow her mamma's example. The major had almost given up looking at ladies at all, even to discover whether they were young or old, handsome or ugly, so perfectly was he aware that little or no profit could be made of them. And as for our fair Matilda, her feelings on the occasion may surely be left to the sagacity of the reader to discover.

"Major Allen Barnaby, gentlemen," said Mrs. Carmichael, with a sort of circular bow to the table, "and *Monsieur Tornorino*, *his son-in-law*."

This, by all the laws of New Orleans elegance, was a proper and sufficient introduction of the whole party, and as such it was received; for as the dinner proceeded, the new guests, whether male or female, were occasionally addressed without reserve by the former ones. Of these former ones, two ladies and two gentlemen were newly-married couples, beginning their married lives by indulging in a "spell of boarding;" the domestic indolence which it permits, rendering it, in all parts of the union, a very favourite portion of human life, but more especially so in the south, where every exertion is considered as a positive evil. These two exceedingly happy couples were known respectively by the names of Mr. and Mrs. Anastasius Grimes, and Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Hucks. The two other ladies were a Mrs. and Miss Beauchamp, and one of the other gentlemen, a Colonel Beauchamp, the husband of the former, and the father of the latter lady.

Mrs. Beauchamp, in any other country than the United States, might still have been considered as young, for she was still remarkably handsome, and wanted three years of forty. Her daughter, a young thing of scarcely seventeen, was as beautiful a girl as it was well possible for the eye to look upon; yet all lovely as she was, it was probable that she would in a year or two be more lovely still; for her graceful form was almost too slight and *élancée* for feminine perfection of outline. But her dark eye already sparkled with intelligence that looked as if the spirit were of greater maturity than the fair shrine it inhabited. She was seated between her father and mother, who seemed to vie with each other in noting everything she did, and everything she said.

Then there were two elderly gentlemen, who soon contrived to make it known to the strangers that they were members of congress; a younger man, by name Horatio Timmsthackle, who hinted at literary occupations; and another younger still, Mr. Washington Tomkins, who seemed the man of fashion, *par excellence*, of the party, for he was more gaily dressed, and gave himself incomparably more airs than any one else. Lastly, there was an Englishman, also a young man; but he gave himself no airs, and was in no way remarkably dressed; but being seated immediately opposite the beautiful Miss Beauchamp, appeared to find more amusement in watching her tricks, than in exhibiting any of his own.

And, in truth, this remarkable young lady afforded him sufficient observation in this way, for her lively mobility equalled her beauty. Whether she ate any dinner at all might have been doubtful at the conclusion of the repast, even to an accurate observer; for it was very difficult to note anything save the expression of her most beautiful face, which recorded a rapid succession of observations on every one present.

For the most part, however, these appeared not to be in the quizzing line, but to be made up of quick remark and a sort of meditative interpretation, which seemed again and again to be the consequence of it. Her dress was as much out of the common

as herself, being composed of the smooth shining linen-cloth of which children's pinbefores are made; but it was delicately fine, and more of an iron-gray, than of the usual yellowish tint. At the throat and wrists it was relieved by the plain white collar and cuffs which a boy might have worn; but the *corsage*, which was fastened in front by a row of little white sugar-loaf buttons, had, like Rebecca's vest, at the tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, its two or three last buttons unfastened; and where are the pearls, or the diamonds, or the rubies, or the emeralds, which would have struck the eye with such a sense of beauty as did the ivory neck thus displayed? The dress was confined round her slender, but not wasp-like waste, by a neatly-fitted band of the same material of which it was made, and the whole effect was enough to have caused a fashionable dressmaker to hang herself, for it proclaimed, with an eloquence not to be mistaken, that her art was worthless. The dark brown silken hair of the beauty appeared to be all of the same length, and was gathered into one smoothly twisted mass, forming a close rich knot at the back of her beautiful little head. Madame Tornorino was seated at the same side of the table as this Annie Beauchamp, and the young Englishman, notwithstanding his *étude suivie* of the fair American features, threw a glance from time to time upon his young countrywoman; the contrast between them was remarkable, and probably did not escape him.

The conversation at an American dinner-table is never much, but the major contrived to find out that the gentleman next to him, a Colonel Wingrove, and one of the members of congress, was fond of a game of piquet, and that Mr. Washington Tomkins, the young man of fashion who sat opposite, was considered as very rich, played at billiards and *écarté*, was trying to get up a horse-race, and was ready to bet upon anything and everything. So, on the whole, Major Allen Barnaby thought the party agreeable, or at any rate that the party composing it had the power of being so.

Considering the number of persons at table, the repast was over in an incredibly short space of time; and then all the gentlemen starting up, the ladies started up after them, the male part of the society strolling off to sundry coffee-houses, and the ladies returning to the "keeping-room," where they amused themselves by drinking lemonade and making conversation.

The extreme heat of the weather might have induced them to scatter themselves as widely as possible apart, for which species of luxury the ample apartment was well suited, had it not been that the natural curiosity of the sex, as well as of the country, induced the American ladies to gather round Mrs. Allen Barnaby and her party, when, by degrees, all reserve disappeared, and the talk among them flowed as freely as if they had known each other for years. The massive Mrs. Carmichael, indeed, soon ceased to be of the society, for sleep overpowered her, and stretched at full length and breadth upon an enormous sofa, she presently ceased to betray any symptom of animated existence, except heavy snoring.

"You have come over in an unaccountable hot season, Miss," said Mrs. Beauchamp, graciously addressing the whole group. "It will be wonderful luck if you all keep out of the fever, and you all fresh Europeans."

"Is there any catching fever in the town, ma'am?" demanded Miss Louisa Perkins, in a voice of alarm.

"Oh my! what a funny question," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, laughing. "Why in summer and autumn time, New Orleans has always got plenty of fever."

"Dear me! Then I hope the major will not think of staying," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby. "A young married woman like my daughter, Madame Tornorino, should always be extremely careful of her health."

"Oh! I don't mind the fever a farthing," said Patty, gaily. "I'm so glad we've got here, for my husband is so delighted with it!"

"That certainly shows that he is a gentleman of taste," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, "for New Orleans is, past doubt, one of the finest cities in the known world."

"Oh, mother! I wish I could see some of the cities in the known world!" exclaimed her daughter.

"What, the European cities, I expect you mean, my dear? Well, more unlikely things have happened than that. An only daughter ma'am—perhaps yours is an only daughter too, and then you will quite understand me when I say, that the only daughter of a gentleman of good standing, very seldom sets her longing upon anything, without having a good chance of getting it."

"Perfectly true, ma'am," returned Mrs. Barnaby, with dignity and feeling. "Madame Tornorino is an only daughter, and I cannot deny that her father's ample fortune has ever anticipated her every wish. So you have fixed your heart upon going to Europe, have you, young lady?"

"I?" said Annie. "Oh no! I have hardly seen anything in my own beautiful land yet."

"I only thought so," returned Mrs. Barnaby, "from what you said about wishing to see the cities of the unknown world; you know."

"Do you call Europe an unknown world?" said Annie, innocently.

"Why, no my dear, certainly not. I did not mean that, of course. But what did you mean? Where was it you were wishing to go?"

"I very seldom mean anything, ma'am, when I speak," replied Miss Beauchamp.

"I hope our daughters will become well acquainted," said Mrs. Beauchamp, looking with a good deal of interest at the handsome silks and satins of the English mother and daughter. "Though your young lady is married, I can promise her that she will be our Annie as smart a person as ever she came across. She is quite famed throughout the Union, already."

"Stuart?" again muttered the puzzled Patty, fixing her eyes on Annie's brown-holland dress.

But notwithstanding the utter contempt which she felt for her claims to smartness, she was too sociably disposed to neglect this offered opportunity of improving her acquaintance with a native, and drawing a chair close to the sofa on which the young American was seated, she began what she intended should be a very intimate conversation.

"I day say you will be full of envy about my being married, won't you? But that must not prevent our being capital good friends. I dare say you will be married soon. How old are you?"

"I think mamma can tell you better than I can," replied Miss Beauchamp. "I have an exceedingly bad memory."

"How very odd!" cried Patty, staring at her. "Not know how old you are? Why, if you was not so young and so pretty," she added, lowering her voice, "that is, if you were like my dear friend there, Miss Matilda Perkins, I should understand it. She is always making mistakes about what age she is. But that is all very natural, isn't it?"

And Patty looked at her poor friend Matilda, and laughed. But Annie neither looked, laughed, nor answered, but sat immovably still, looking as much like a fool as she could possibly contrive to do. Poor Matilda, meanwhile, who felt that her American campaign could not possibly begin till she had made some acquaintance with the natives, was receiving, with the most pleased and zealous attention, some little initiatory civilities from Mrs. Grimes and Mrs. Hucks.

"You are direct from London, I expect, ma'am?" said Mrs. Grimes.

"Yes, from London, direct, ma'am," responded Miss Matilda, delighted with the opportunity thus afforded her of putting the stamp of fashion upon everything she did, and everything she wore.

"I wish to goodness you had come direct from Paris instead!" said Mrs. Hucks. "I expect you know, ma'am, that the people of fashion in the Union, from Maine to Georgia, I may say, don't lay any great stress upon the fashion of London. We calculate that we have long ago given the go-by to that old city. But Paris is something. We are all ready and willing to knock under there, in the article of taste and the fine arts, such as millinery, dressmaking, and the like. We count that England is worn out altogether in that respect, which is the reason, I expect, why folks call it the old country."

This was a terrible blow to poor Matilda; nevertheless her spirits rallied again, as she recollected how very much nearer Paris was to London than New Orleans, and much more anxious to conciliate than to triumph, she gently replied, "That is just what we all say ourselves. We all consider everything in London as exceed

ingly old-fashioned, excepting just what is brought over to us fresh from Paris, which happens very often, you know, because of the two places being so near."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby, who had overheard the latter part of this conversation, here volunteered her valuable assistance to Miss Matilda, and feeling quite as desirous of being considered as an arrival of fashionable importance as her friend could be, with a vastly bolder spirit whereby to defend her claim, she speedily took the business very effectively into her own hands.

"Nothing can be more correct, ma'am, than your observation respecting the London fashions," said she. "I am sure one might think you were just come from Europe to hear you, for all you say is exactly as if a London lady was saying it. But of course you know, ma'am, how we manage about these matters? When I say *we*, I mean to be understood as speaking of people of first-rate importance and fashion, who have been introduced at court, you know, and all that; for the common middling kind of gentry really know very little about the matter, and are as well contented when they put their vulgar stupid heads into a London-made bonnet, as if it had been brought express from Paris. But we, of the upper class, cannot endure anything of the kind. Couriers arrive in London from Paris four times in every day, for no other purpose in the world than just to bring over bonnets and dresses. You cannot think what a pretty sight it is, just after one of these spring vans has arrived, to see the unpacking of the cases in the rooms of the fashionable milliners! I really do not know anything so elegant and so interesting! No ladies, however, who have not been presented at court, are ever permitted to be present on these occasions. It was absolutely necessary, you know, to make some arrangement and regulation of this kind, or the milliners' rooms would have been filled with a perfect mob. But since this has been finally settled, nothing can be more elegant than the company one meets on these occasions."

"Really! Well now, that does seem to be a very queer idea, to be sure, let who will have invented it!" said Mrs. Beauchamp, with a little air of disdain. "But pray, ma'am, are gentlemen ever admitted?"

"Certainly they are," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby with dignity. "Such, I mean, as have been presented at court."

"Oh! then Mr. Robert Owen goes to see the caps and bonnets, I expect," said Annie Beauchamp, innocently.

"If he is a man of fashion, I dare say he does," answered the not-too-well-informed Mrs. Allen Barnaby.

The young lady did not reply, but closed her eyes as if disposed to sleep. The conversation, however, proceeded between the other ladies, who all, with the exception of Miss Louisa, seemed anxious to hear what further Mrs. Allen Barnaby would say, and Mrs. Beauchamp answer.

"It was but a day or two before we quitted London."

former lady, "that we paid our compliments for the last time this season to her Majesty Queen Victoria, and a sweet, pretty, amiable creature she is, I assure you. It is a great advantage, ma'am, especially where one has a young daughter to bring out, to have the privilege of going to court. There is nothing in the whole world will stand in the place of that—positively nothing."

"I will tell you what, my good lady," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, her handsome eyes looking rather fierce, and her complexion considerably heightened—"I will tell you one thing out of pure cleverness and good nature. I expect you won't find it answer coming over American ladies with long stories about going to court, because it is the very thing of all creation that we most hate, despise, and abominate. You can't, I expect, though you do come from the old country, you can't be so unaccountable ignorant as not to know that a court is a thing we would no more permit in this country than we would the putting of poison into our bread; that the very name of it turns us sick, and that all the unfortunate people, that God, in one of his mysteries, permits still to be the pitiful victims of such unnatural and degrading oppression, ought never to mention such a thing in the presence of a free citizen, any more than they would any other disgraceful or indecent misfortune that unhappily belonged to them."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was so completely thunderstruck and overpowered by this unexpected burst of eloquence, that almost for the first time in her life she felt unable to answer a word. It is probable that Mrs. Beauchamp, who, excepting when her patriotic feelings (upon which she particularly prided herself) were touched, was really a very amiable woman—it is highly probable that she not only saw, but lamented the very violent effect she had produced. She would have scorned and hated herself had she, upon hearing a person actually boast of having been at a court (without being forced to go there by political necessity, like the American ministers)—she would have scorned, hated, and belittled herself for ever, had she heard this without raising the hallowed voice of freedom to express her sense of its baseness. But she did not the least in the world wish to be otherwise than exceedingly polite and genteel in her demeanour to Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and all other European ladies. Such were now her secret feelings as she watched the perturbed and puzzled countenance of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and had she known them, she would very likely have parodied against herself the famous lines—

Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick me down stairs?

Under the influence of feelings such as these, Mrs. Beauchamp determined to make it manifest to the strangers, that a perfect 'American female' could be as much celebrated and distinguished for her politeness and her literature, as for her patriotism and political superiority. With this view, she at once changed her

heroic tone for one of familiar kindness, and said, "I must not let you, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and these other ladies, who have come such a curious long way to see our western wonder of the world—I must not let you all fancy that the patriotic warmth of our notions blinds us to all those accomplishments as having nothing to do with the government. It is quite the contrary, I assure you, and I expect that you'll realise this fact before you have been long in the country. The great point of all with us is your literature, you know, which we make a most particular principle of studying. And that, to our honour be it spoken, even now, when we are quite availed of the fact that we have for some months past, by our native productions, gone far beyond anything that ever was printed or written in the old world. But this, of course, can't touch any of us in the manner of a surprise, because all philosophical people know that a soil that is close worked up and worn out, can't be expected to produce things as fine and flourishing on new soil. There is nobody, I expect, that will venture to contradict that, now-a-days. But never a bit the less for that, we are still ready to extend the hand of patronage to European talent. And, I'll tell you what, ladies, there is still, notwithstanding the terrible great advance which our authors have lately made before the English, there is still one way in which an English gentleman, or lady either, might put everybody of all countries in the world behind them in the point of fame; and that is by writing an out-and-out good book of travels upon the United States. I believe that there is nobody bold enough to deny that it is the finest subject in the world, and so it would have been, no doubt of it, if nobody had ever put pen to paper about it. But when one thinks of all the lies that have got to be contradicted, one must be a fool not to see that such a book might be made as would render the author's name as glorious throughout the Union as that of General Lafayette himself. And as to dollars! Oh, my! There would be no end to the dollars as would be made by it."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby, through all the various changes and chances of her life, must ever have appeared to the reader what she really was—namely, a woman of very extraordinary conduct. Though in general, perhaps, more of a talker than a listener, she felt as she now listened to Mrs. Beauchamp, that at the present moment much more was to be gained by acquiring than by giving information; and when her first dismay, occasioned by Mrs. Beauchamp's patriotic outbreak, had subsided, she gave her earnest and undivided attention to every syllable she uttered.

It must elevate the characters of both Major Allen Barnaby and his lady in the mind of my readers, when they are told that they were at this period of their lives on much more confidential terms together than at any former time since their union.

Both these excellent persons had their peculiarities, and though on many points it was quite impossible that any two could assimilate better, there were others respecting which

When they first married, that they might not perhaps, from the influence of their previous habits of life, hold precisely the same opinions. Under this impression he had, in many cases, secretly concealed some little circumstances which he thought it possibly startle his lady, and so managed others, as gently as he could before her eyes whatever he wished should become familiar to her, and thus by degrees, had gradually led her to a degree of independent thinking on most subjects, hardly inferior to his own. That now he had really scarcely a thought that he concealed from her, and she was quite as well aware that his position was at times a little critical as he could be himself. It was doubtless the reason that she now listened to Mrs. Beauchamp with such attention. The major had given her very clearly to understand, that their well-doing for the future depended altogether on their being able to establish themselves in the esteem and liking of the inhabitants of the land in which they had taken refuge, from a good deal that might have made it difficult for them to find an agreeable abode elsewhere. Every word that her new acquaintance uttered, therefore, seemed to her of great importance, and before she had ceased to speak, the effect had been produced on the mind of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as she afterwards said, in communicating it to the major, likely to have an influence on the whole of her future life. When deep impressions are made upon the soul, it often lasts, for a time, as if the effect produced were working so gently within as to prevent any portion of the result from being visible without. And so it was on the present occasion with Mrs. Allen Barnaby. Neither Mrs. Beauchamp herself, nor any person present, were in the least degree aware of what was going on in the secret recesses of her mind. Nevertheless, she had the command of herself to retain the appearance of being fully present to everything that was passing. When Mrs. Hucks remarked to her that "there was no country in the world enjoyed the luxury of iced water in the same elegant manner as New Orleans," she bowed and smiled exactly with a proper degree of acquiescence; and when Mrs. Hucks, holding out her hand for inspection, said that she supposed the ladies had heard of American females were famous for their beauty in that particular part of the person, any one in the world who had seen her, would have supposed that she knew what had been said. But, in fact, she had not the slightest idea what the observation was, yet with a sort of instinctive cleverness made a little action of her hand towards Miss Matilda Perkins, who was sitting near her, as if to refer the matter to her, from thinking her a person likely well calculated to discuss it. This instantly carried her to the mind of every American lady present, except the sleeping Annie, Miss Matilda; and as that graceful young lady was blessed with a long slender foot, which might have defied the toes of

though there was "stuff enough" in one of her long slippers to make a pair for many, it answered very well, as it brought on a long discussion upon long feet and short feet, and broad feet and narrow feet, and round feet and square feet—all of which sheltered the reverry of Mrs. Allen Barnaby from observation, and enabled her very satisfactorily to arrange her thoughts before she was called upon by Mrs. Carmichael to decide whether she would take coffee or tea.

By that time she had sufficiently recovered her usual state of mind to be aware that of all the party which had dined together, her own set and the portly lady of the mansion were all that remained in the saloon, and it was not without a sensation of envy that she learned they were all gone to various evening parties, of which a vast number were nightly given in the town. The only gentleman who reappeared was the young Englishman, Mr. Egerton; but having looked round the large half-lighted room in search of some one whom, as it appeared, he did not find, he rambled into the moonlit balcony for a few minutes, then passed through the saloon again, and disappeared.

Dulness seemed now to settle heavily upon the party. Mr. Carmichael, after subjecting Miss Matilda Perkins, who chanced to be the one seated next her, to the usual transatlantic process of interrogation, as to everything about her goings and doings, past and future, did not appear to consider herself obliged to do the honours of her mansion any further; and having caused a female slave to bring in a large square of light-green gauze, and so to arrange it round her head, neck, and arms as to protect her from the attacks of mosquitoes, she deliberately prepared herself for sleep.

Had Mrs. Allen Barnaby, therefore, been at that moment inclined for conversation (which she certainly was not), she would not have indulged in it; her fixed and steadfast resolution to conciliate every man, woman, and child in the Union, being quite sufficient to prevent her running the risk of keeping any of them awake when they wished to sleep; so she quietly prepared herself to follow her gigantic hostess's example. But she soon found that there were two causes which would render this impossible. The first and most important was the absence of the green gauze—for no sooner had she lain herself in an attitude of rest, than a sharp threatening buzz became audible around her; and in the next, that irritating paroxysm of feverish unrest supervened, which none can conceive or comprehend who have not been exposed to the torment. The second cause of prevention to her desired repose was the voice of her daughter, who now began, in accents less soft than those of the forsaken wood-pigeon, first to deplore the cruel absence of her lord, and then to predict how he should be treated when she got him again.

So Mrs. Allen Barnaby reared herself up again, and, looking round her, conceived the very rational idea that, let the case be what it might, the best thing they could do would be to

what too jocose for the matter of it, his wife took it in very good part, declaring herself perfectly satisfied, and declaring also that she should lose no time in beginning her interesting and very important task.

"I shall of course," she added, "greatly want some competent person to assist me with information on many points wherein it will be impossible for me immediately to obtain it myself! but what I hope and trust to, is, that I shall be able to form a close intimacy with that charming woman, Mrs. Beauchamp; and you, my dearest major, must help me to obtain this object. I know nobody in the world so capable of putting a thing in a good light as you are, when you have a mind to do it. You know what I mean, my dear Donny—a little embellishment, and the least bit in the world of invention, will make everything easy to me. All I want you to do is just to say to Mrs. Beauchamp, in your clever, easy way, that I have been rather celebrated in my own country as an author, but that hitherto, from modesty, I have always published under a feigned name. And then, you know, if you like it, you may just hint at any one particular author you please, saying enough to put her upon the scent, but without committing yourself by absolutely pronouncing any particular name."

"Yes, certainly, I could do that," answered the major, "if you thought it would do any good."

"Good? Trust me, Donny, it would do all the good in the world; and if you will only help me so far, you shall see that I know how to help myself too. I'll take care, major, not to disgrace whatever you may take it into your head to say of me."

"Very well, my dear, then you have only to tell me in what direction my hints are to go. I shall not like to begin till I am quite sure of putting you and your side-saddle upon the right horse. Who, of all the lady-writers, would you best like to be taken for?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby mused for a moment or two before she replied, and then said—

"Mrs. Hemings, I am afraid, is dead; isn't she?"

"Yes, my dear, she is," said the major.

"And Miss Austin? What's become of Miss Austin?"

"I am afraid she is dead, too, my Barnaby," said he.

"Dear me, how provoking!" returned the lady; "but it does not signify, there are lots more. Let us see—there is Miss Edgeworth."

"But you know, my dear, she has never been married. How should we manage about Patty? It will be downright scandal to make out that our Patty is the child of an unmarried lady," said the conscientious Major Allen Barnaby.

"Then I don't care a straw who it is," returned his wife. "You must make out I am somebody famous, and that will do."

"Very well, my dear, I really think I do understand you"

now perfectly : and you are such a devilish clever woman, that I don't say, somehow or other, you will make the scheme answer. It's my best, at any rate, to help you. But hark !—there is the thundering breakfast-bell ! Now watch me, and see if I don't act about my part of the job without losing time."

CHAPTER X.

AT ten o'clock, or thereabouts, the comfortable inmates, that is to say, the white inmates of Mrs. Carmichael's establishment, usually met for breakfast. Most of them obeyed the summons of the great bell on this occasion simultaneously, entering the room about at the same moment, and were proceeding to take their places at the table in the same order as at the dinner of yesterday, when Major Allen Barnaby, with that sort of easy good humour which all but find it so difficult to resist, turned from the place he had before occupied beside his lady, and dropping into the chair next Mr. Beauchamp, said—

"It is too cruel, ladies and gentlemen, to condemn a poor Englishman, who has crossed the Atlantic expressly for the purpose of making acquaintance with persons whose national character he considers as the first in the world, it will be much too cruel if you insist upon all our party sitting together, so that we can speak to none other. Shall I be forgiven if I break through the established order of things, and, begging Mr. Washington Tomkins to take my seat beside Mrs. Allen Barnaby, venture to place myself next the lady of Colonel Beauchamp?"

It is probable, by the smile and the bow which were exchanged, as this was said, between the colonel and the major, that some progress towards acquaintance had been made between them during the rambling of the preceding evening ; at any rate, the overture was well received. Mrs. Beauchamp smiled very graciously upon the major as he took his seat, and the elegant Mr. Washington Tomkins muttered something about "vastly happy," as he looked full in the face of the beautiful Annie, and sat down in the chair opposite to her.

Major Allen Barnaby, doubtless, flattered himself that the chat of a breakfast-table would give him the opportunity he wanted of communicating a little information respecting the high literary reputation of his wife, and it is probable that the massive appearance of the viands on the table, suggesting the necessity of length of time for their consumption, might have made him feel sure of having ample time before him for that purpose.

But in this he deceived himself altogether ; beefsteaks of an inch and a half in thickness disappeared, it was impossible to guess how, with the rapidity of an omelette soufflée ; coffee, as hot as Mrs. Carmichael could make it, was poured down the unobscured

Louisianian ladies and gentlemen, with the impunity of a charbet, and enormous platters of scalding hot bread had with a celerity that really suggested the idea of magic. In short, every American lady and gentleman had breakfasted, and sufficiently, before Major Allen Barnaby had done more towards the conversation to the point he aimed at, than saying that Mrs. Allen Barnaby would be fortunate enough to make acquaintance of some intimacy with the lady he had the happiness of addressing, as it was highly essential to the particular objects in view, that she should know and be known to the most distinguished persons in the Union.

Mrs. Beauchamp seemed by no means displeased at this. She smiled and she smiled; but before it was possible she could speak, the gentlemen of the party rose, and all the ladies immediately followed their example, and rose after them. The breakfast was over and the heavily-laden table cleared.

Major Allen Barnaby was startled, but not defeated. He spoke of the luxury of Mrs. Carmichael's large, cool saloon, and said he thought the ladies did not entirely forsake it in the mornings.

"Why, it isn't very often, I expect, that you'll find American ladies there, major, unless they are just quite literary people, who pick up everything for the sake of conversing with gentlemen and reading books; I don't calculate that, except these, you'll often find American ladies out of their own chambers in a morning anywhere."

"Then I trust that you and your charming daughter are both devoted to literature?" he replied. "You will, indeed, at least find a most suitable and truly congenial companion in Mrs. Allen Barnaby. She has never yet published anything under her own name but ——"

Here all the party having begun to move off, Mrs. Beauchamp was obliged to move off too; which the major perceiving, again expressed his hope that she and her daughter, who had now taken their leave, were going to the saloon.

"Well, I don't care if I do take a spell in the keeping-room this morning," she replied; her curiosity being in truth as vividly kindled as Major Allen Barnaby himself could desire by the time she had spoken.

They therefore moved on together, and the balcony with its fine trees being now in perfect shade, the attentive major led Mrs. Barnaby into it, and was presently happy enough to find himself seated on a bench with the charming Mrs. Beauchamp.

"As yet," he immediately resumed, "Mrs. Allen Barnaby has not published any work with her own name; but *entre nous*, and in a very great secret, I will whisper in your ear that she does not always go on in that way; and in fact, for I see no reason why I should not confess it to a lady so evidently of superior talents, you are,—in fact, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, our chief business now visiting your glorious country is to give her an oppor-

tunity of writing her remarks upon it. You have no idea how admirable her style is, and in just appreciation of character I will venture to say that she has no equal. If she succeeds in this undertaking, as I fully hope and expect she will do, I have told her plainly that I will not permit her any longer to conceal her name. You must not think me a tyrant, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, because I speak thus authoritatively; but like all persons of genius, Mrs. Allen Barnaby appreciates her own talents with a degree of modesty that is absolutely absurd; and really, in my opinion, it has become a duty, for the sake of her daughter, and the noble Spanish family with whom we have been so happy as to ally ourselves, that a fame so richly earned, should not be thrown away upon a supposititious name. Do you not agree with me? Do you not think I am right?"

"Indeed, and indeed, I do, sir!" replied the greatly excited Mrs. Beauchamp; "but may I just ask you the favour of telling me under what name your lady has hitherto published?"

Major Allen Barnaby looked in the lady's handsome face with a very intelligent smile, and raising his fore-finger to the side of his nose, said—

"There are some things, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, that I *don't* do; but I will tell you one thing for your satisfaction, that if you shall be induced to bestow as much of your valuable friendship upon my admirable wife, as I am inclined to flatter myself you will do, I will venture to say that you will not be long before you discover her secret. Her manner of thinking, her manner of speaking, will be sure to betray her—and I will not deny that I shall be heartily glad of it; for in this distinguished country, at any rate, she will then enjoy the possession of the fame which she had so wantonly sported with, and I may say, thrown away in Europe. Yes, Mrs. Beauchamp, though I know she would quarrel with me for saying so, I really shall be delighted if you find her out."

"And so, I guess, shall I be too!" returned Mrs. Beauchamp, with great animation. "Oh! it would be first-rate delightful to turn round some day, smack upon her, and call her by her *false* name. I *shall* enjoy it to be sure! And you must not refuse, major, to give me a little token, now and then, if you see I am in the right way, and cry 'Burn!' as the children do when they are playing hide-and-seek."

"As much as I can venture to do so without getting into a scrape, I certainly will," he replied; "for, depend upon it, I shall enjoy the joke as much as you will. And may I then hope, my dear madam, that now you are aware what Mrs. Allen Barnaby's object is in coming to this country, you will extend a helping hand to her, and by giving her the assistance of native information (without which it is absolutely impossible that such a work can be satisfactorily produced) enable her at once to do justice to her own talents, and to the magnificent subject she has undertaken."

"There is nothing in all creation, sir, that I should so much"

to do," eagerly returned Mrs. Beauchamp. "All the women in the Union—the white women, of course, I mean—are counted good patriots; indeed, they are pretty considerable famous for it; but I expect that you won't light upon one from Maine to Georgia, as out-tops me in that respect; and what my mind has undergone in the way of rage at all the horrible, scandalous, lying books, as have been spit out by the envy of the old country against us, is a great deal more than I will choose to describe. But it is quite droll to think what I said to your lady last evening, major; why she must have thought I was a witch to be sure!"

"What did you say to her, madam?" demanded he, with every appearance of eager curiosity.

"What, then," said Mrs. Beauchamp, "she never mentioned to you—she never told you, that I had been talking exactly of such a book as what you have now been speaking of, and saying what an outrageous beautiful success it was sure to have in the Union, if it was but written with decent attention to truth, and such a conformity to the merits of the country as the in-dwellers in it, who everybody must allow are the only proper judges, would be likely to approve? Did not your lady say anything about this, major?"

"No, not a word," he replied.

"Dear me, how very odd!"

"Not the least odd in the world, my dear lady," he replied, "as you would be ready to allow, did you know Mrs. Allen Barnaby better. She has so much delicate reserve about her on every point at all relative to her literary pursuits, that I am persuaded *nothing* could have prevailed upon her to touch upon the subject."

"My! How unaccountably remarkable that a lady of such first-rate smart talents should be so uncommon shy about it! But it seems to me, sir, as if what you was so kind as to mention just now, could never come to pass, I mean as regarding any use I might be of about making her take the right view of things. How will she ever be able to abide my telling her that I know what she is about?" demanded the anxious female patriot.

"Your question, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, enables me, while I reply to it, to give you another characteristic trait of my admirable wife—you must forgive my calling her so. The fact is, that exactly in proportion as she avoids all allusion to her own great literary success with all who are incapable of assisting her efforts, she sedulously cultivates every possible opportunity of entering into discussion with those whom she imagines can give her any species of information on the themes about which she is engaged. Doubt not, therefore, that if you will have the excessive kindness to give her the advantage of your knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, she will not only enter with you on the subject with the most open-hearted frankness, but will listen to every word you utter with equal respect and gratitude; and thus, my dearest lady, you will be the means of at length sending into the world such a

work upon the United States of America as may safely be depended on as authentic."

"Then I wish I may be flogged like a nigger if I don't devote myself to the business, body and soul!" replied Mrs. Beauchamp, her whole countenance kindling with patriotic energy. "Mr. Allen Barnaby has nothing to do, but just to say when she wants me, and I'll be ready to give up all the frolics in creation, rather than not be ready to go to her. Yes, major, please Heaven, the Stars and the Stripes shall have justice done to them at last! Let your lady only do as you say, and mind me, and all that I have got to tell her, and if her book don't prove to her worth a precious deal more than its weight in gold, then say that I am a false-hearted woman, and send me to the Penitentiary."

Major Allen Barnaby felt that if he talked all day he could add nothing to the impression he had already made; he therefore rose, and took a most respectful leave, saying that he should immediately announce to his fortunate wife the happiness that awaited her.

While this conversation had been going on at one end of the long balcony, a *tête-à-tête* equally exclusive was proceeding at the other. Annie Beauchamp, who had taken her mother's arm as they left the breakfast-room, retained it till they reached the balcony: but there she dropped it, because Mrs. Beauchamp walked towards a seat which had no orange-tree in full flower near it; and therefore the young lady turned her steps the other way, and seated herself where one of those fragrant shrubs was in the greatest Malaprop perfection. *Perhaps*, Major Allen Barnaby's being at her mother's side, might have made this movement rather more decided than it would have been without it; for Annie, too, was a patriot, and though a kind-hearted and sweet-tempered girl in other respects, certainly nourished, ay, and carefully nourished, too, a pretty considerable strong prejudice and dislike, not only to the whole English nation in general, but to each and all of the unfortunate individuals from that country with whom she had ever made acquaintance. In fact, if a stranger were presented to her, it was enough for Annie to know that he was an Englishman, in order to set all her faculties to work, in order "to read him backwards."

If such a one, enchanted by her very uncommon beauty, inadvertently permitted his eye to rest for a moment on her lovely face, "he was the most ill-bred and impertinent of men." Did an English traveller venture to mention any beauty, either of nature or of art, that he had left behind him, she would exclaim to her neighbour—

"Only listen to him! Can you conceive any thing more absurd and insufferable? Instead of employing his time in examining our glorious and unequalled country, there he sits, you see, talking of his own! Poor, paltry, miserable, little atom of an island, as it is!"

If her beautiful eyes beheld a tall Englishman, "he looked like the mast of a ship"—if a short one encountered the same individual blessing, "he was a caricature of Tom Thumb"—*—M. G.*

INDIVIDUAL PREJUDICES.

ful as the Apollo, she was "convinced he must be a dancer;" and if his conversation betrayed any traces of learning could exclaim to her nearest friend—

Oh! for mercy's sake take me out of hearing of that odious master. I am as certain as that I live that he comes from those hateful abysses of superstition and slavery that they call Oxford and Cambridge!—the very sight of him makes me ill!—Such being the state of her feelings, it was not very surprising she preferred her favourite orange-tree to being seated near Allen Barnaby.

But if Annie's chief motive for the preference, was sinning out of the way of an Englishman, she was unlucky; scarcely had she placed herself at her ease, with a little *tabouret* for pretty feet, and a cushion for her elbow to rest upon, than Egerton, not only an Englishman, but a Cantabrigia boot, had the audacity to approach her. Now, to say the truth, Mr. Egerton, notwithstanding talents of a very high order, excellent principles, and a heart replete with a multitude of amiable qualities, was equally as much under the influence of prejudice as Annie Beauchamp herself.

In common with a multitude of young Englishmen, who were ripening faculties during the last ten years have enabled them to look on upon the perilous political drama which has been performing, with clear judgment, and views unobscured by early prepossessions of any kind, Mr. Egerton, in common with a vast majority of these sages of his own age, felt too deep-rooted a reverence for the monarchical institutions of his own country, to tolerate antagonist principles so loudly vaunted throughout the United States of America. Moreover, he was deeply convinced of the political, as well as of the religious necessity of an established faith for the perfect working of the social contract which binds together under one government. Moreover, again, the system of slavery was abhorrent to every feeling and faculty of his head, heart, and soul. Moreover, again, he was greatly disposed to misdeem the honesty—public and individual—of any country where bribery and corruption—public and individual—was a matter of constant recurrence and constant indifference. Moreover, again, he exceedingly disliked listening to the human voice, when it came to him through the nose of the speaker; and finally, approved no dialect of English but that which was held to be the standard language of his native land.

With all these, so "strong against the deed," it may seem strange that the young man, after having well-nigh satiated himself with travel, through pretty nearly every country in Europe, should have taken it into his head to cross the Atlantic in order to visit the land he did not love, instead of enjoying the noble forests and beautiful residence which he had inherited in that which he loved.

But the wisest and best among us have their whims, and the expedition of Egerton's must, I suppose, be reckoned among them.

The immediately propelling cause, however, of his setting off, was at a dinner-party, where he met with a pretty-considerably-famous American author, who not content with entertaining the company by a good set speech of half an hour long, in praise of the glories and immortal institutions of his own country—slavery and all—concluded it (not being in one of his best humours that day, on account of an English duke having entered the dining-room before him) by rather a savage attack on the inglorious and perishable ones of this.

Mr. Egerton ventured to make an observation or two on the opposite side; but the American celebrity cut him short, by saying

“I beg your pardon, sir, if I can't count your opinion as any way suitable to stand against mine; and my reason is this:—I have seen only one of the two countries you are comparing together, and I have seen both, and I leave it to any man to say which is the best right to be listened to.”

“I submit, sir, to the force of your argument,” replied Egerton; “you must have it your own way.”

But he left not the dinner-table without making a resolution, that however great the bore might be, he would steam to New York as early as possible, and not steam back again till he had visited every state in the Union.

Perhaps there might have been some little irritation of feeling in the mood which dictated this resolve; but he had pledged his promise to himself in earnest, and would not have revoked it, even had his after thoughts led to still greater repugnance as to the keeping it than they did.

“At any rate, I shall see Niagara,” said he, “there is an overwhelming force of consolation in that.”

So Mr. Egerton set forth, and had already very nearly performed his destined task at the time of our meeting him at New Orleans.

Excepting the person of Miss Beauchamp, which, with a degree of candour of which he really felt proud, he acknowledged to himself was by far the loveliest he had ever seen in any land; and, perhaps, excepting also, her dress (the capricious sort of plainness of which rather piqued his taste to the acknowledgment that no garment more meretricious ever so well became a female form); with these two exceptions made, Mr. Egerton was by no means disposed to think that Miss Beauchamp was in any degree better suited to his taste than the rest of her countrywomen. He had dined twice in her company, and his attention had been particularly drawn to her by the uncommon beauty which scarcely a child could have passed by unheeded; but he had thought her manner exceedingly defective. There was no amenity, no tranquil grace, no smoothness in it. Whatever she said, seemed spoken fearfully, as if from very perfect indifference as to whether she might give thereby pleasure or not. And then her voice, though not naturally really given her organs which should have rendered it a fine one, had something in its intonation which grated.

of his feelings. It could hardly be called a nasal voice, but there was a sort of singing cadence in it, which drew off the attention (at least of stranger-ears so constituted as those of Frederic Egerton) from what she said, to her manner of saying it. He was perfectly ready to call the flexible young voice detestable for all that, he was ready to acknowledge, that he had hitherto seen quite enough of her to judge her fairly; and he gravely determined that he would not be unjust, no, not even on a point so absolutely no importance, as whether a trumpery American were a little more or a little less disagreeable.

In conformity with this high principled resolve, he had sought to converse with her on more occasions than one, but hitherto with very little success; and, upon seeing her accompany her mother to the balcony, while nearly all the rest of the company were chattering themselves elsewhere, he followed for the purpose of advancing his philosophical study of this peculiar specimen of the race he had crossed the Atlantic to scrutinise.

CHAPTER XI.

THE vulgar, but expressive, old phrase, "There is no love lost between them," might have been applied with the most perfect correctness to Miss Annie Beauchamp and Mr. Frederic Egerton; but they wore their dislike, such as it was, with a difference.

The gentleman, as we have seen, being rather persevering in his purpose of knowing more of the young lady, while the young lady if left to herself, would have been perfectly well contented had she been assured that she should never see the young gentleman again. Nor did this difference arise from the fact on his part that he was ready to acknowledge her the most beautiful person he had ever seen; for, on hers, she was equally ready to acknowledge that he was, by many degrees, the handsomest person she had ever seen and at the centre of both hearts there was the thought, "But oh so perfectly American!" and—"But oh! so perfectly English!" the difference, therefore, arose from temper.

Annie was less speculative than Mr. Egerton; at least, when her mind was so completely made up on a subject as she felt it to be on the present occasion; and Mr. Egerton was more disposed to analyse, even though conscious that he already knew what the result must be.

"I suppose this is about the coolest place in New Orleans, Miss Beauchamp," said Egerton, venturing to seat himself on the farthest extremity of the long wooden sort of sofa which the young lady occupied.

"I dare say there may be a great many much cooler, for those who know anything about the place. Strangers never know what

added to the word *thing*."

"What an odious girl!" mentally exclaimed the young man, "and with such profound ignorance too! What on earth can you know of English travellers?"

And then he cast a glance towards her, and took a second glance, certainly without intending it, such a face, smile, and such an attitude, as are only exhibited on the earth to show what a woman may be when no earthly accident has arisen to injure the original intention of Heaven.

It is rather an old observation that "beauty will have its price," but it is not the less true for its antiquity, and Frederick felt more than at that moment, if he did not quite forgive her, felt more to hear her speak again than he had ever done before.

"Have you travelled much yourself, Miss Beauchamp?" he asked, in a very gentle accent, and not at all as if he were angry.

"Alas, no!" she replied, without any caustic answer, if regardless that it was only a detestable Englishman who asked the question; but it was one that touched feelings which the French nation had nothing to do, and she forgot herself.

"You have not, however, lost much time as yet travelling, what is there to prevent your enjoying it?"

"Oh, there is nothing in the world, I expect, to be had by enjoying it, except our not being able to set out. But if you will make it convene to travel in a coach, I'll travel in a wagon; if that won't do, I'll just get along on foot;

stark, that he might have the twofold amusement of looking at her. "Pray tell me," he continued, "what is laughable in the idea of travelling beyond the United

States?" she answered, after a moment's consideration, "the notion of any one's wanting to see that musty, fusty, little old world which you call Europe, when they may remain in the opening glories of this bright, young world, which is America, and that, too, with the proud privilege of being citizens."

"A little fool!" thought Egerton. "What a pity that such a woman should have nothing better to inspire their wonderful imaginations than the fables of a handful of crackbrained, conceited persons!"

But he wished her to say more, and therefore resumed the conversation with great civility.

"You mean, Miss Beauchamp, that after having become acquainted with the land of your birth, you shall feel no more to see any other?—particularly that, for instance, whence the white inhabitants of your own highly-approved land derive their origin?"

There was something in the wording of this speech that seemed to offend the young American. She did not look either as if she wished to answer it, but she paused a moment or two as if to collect her thoughts for the purpose.

"Curiosity? Shall I have any curiosity to visit the tombs of my respectable great-grandfathers? Why, upon my word, a better reward can be proposed to me for the trouble and expense of crossing the Atlantic, than seeing the crumbling relics of a roughly worn-out race, I really think it would be a great pleasure to stay at home."

Egerton now smiled a little to himself; upon perceiving the colour of the beautiful Annie mounted to her temples, a glance she gave him certainly amounted to a flash of indignation.

This was hardly fair; he had borne her laugh more than he deserved. However, he thought it was very amusing to look at her various moods, and thinking, perhaps, that he should not let his mind dwell on it even if she boxed his ears, he looked as grave as a lord, and replied—

"Of course you have studied, as an elementary part of your education, the present state of the mother-country relatively to the rest of Europe, or rather to the rest of the world? I believe the progressive plan of American female education considers this as absolutely indispensable?"

"Yes, sir," she very gravely replied, "it does; and I do assure you that for all our studies, it is this which most awakens in our minds the most excellent gift of pity, and those gentle feelings of sympathy, which Christian teachers consider it one of their chief duties to create and cultivate. We are quite aware that the

noble race of men which now people the broad surface of the United States, must have derived their origin from a stock possessing the materials of greatness. And we look back upon this not with such moderate feelings of affectionate interest as a rational man experiences for the dust of his great-great-great-grandfather. But as we know that it pleased the Almighty Mover of nations to cause the estimable remnant of the community to forsake the falling country, when they perceived that it was become unworthy of them, and to seek refuge here, our affections naturally and rationally fix themselves upon the brave transatlantic portion of the race, not only because they are the fathers of the people to whom we belong, but also because the very reason for the *original* separation, as well as for the immortal *secondary* one, proves beyond the reach of any question on the subject, that **THEY** are worthy of all reverence and affection, and that those they left are **NOT**—though they are indeed, and ever will be, while they are permitted to retain their political existence at all, the objects of very sincere compassion."

"Upon my word, Miss Beauchamp, we are, or ought to be, excessively obliged to you," returned Egerton, not knowing whether he felt most surprised or provoked by the young lady's grandiloquent harangue. "Permit me to return thanks," he added, rising and making her a low bow, "for the testimony you have been pleased to exhibit of your benevolence towards the English nation."

"Poor people!" murmured Annie, casting her eyes down with a sort of pitying dejection, and at the same time heaving a deep sigh.

Egerton, puzzled and plagued by the strange form the young lady's patriotism had now taken, looked at her with as much curiosity as admiration, while she continued to retain her whimsically plaintive attitude; but when she furtively raised her eyes again, there was an expression in them which made him shrewdly suspect she was only amusing herself at his expense, and that it was malice towards him, rather than the love she boasted for her country, which had inspired her. If this were the case, he felt that the little republican had the advantage of him; and as the idea crossed his mind, it was doubtful whether he was more pained or provoked. The former feeling prompted him to continue the conversation, in the hope of being able to use weapons of somewhat the same nature in his defence, while the latter suggested the wisdom of leaving the very absurd young lady to herself. But while he yet doubted, the question was decided for him by Major Allen Barnaby's bowing himself off—a ceremony which was immediately followed by Mrs. Beauchamp's advancing towards them, and saying—

"Come, Annie, my daughter, I want you in my chamber—I have got one or two jobs that I expect you must do for yourself besides, I have got something to say to you."

Thus summoned, Annie gave one rapid, wicked glance

countenance of the young Englishman, and with a slight parting bow, retired.

Egerton replaced himself on the bench, and fell into a fit of musing.

"She is insufferable," he muttered, "I cannot endure her!"

A movement of impatience caused him to rise again and pace the long balcony of which, luckily for his irritated feelings, he had the sole possession, with slow and discontented-sounding strides.

"I hate the country!" he ejaculated, half aloud; "I hate and detest it from one end to the other. The negroes and Indians are the only interesting part of the population, and the only thing approaching to civilised society that I have enjoyed since I landed was at the German village at—at—at—heaven knows where. Would to heaven that this self-inflicted penance were over! I must steam up that nasty muddy Mississippi, or I break faith with myself, which I never will do, had every house I could enter half a dozen Miss Annie Beauchamps in it—and a pretty company they would make!—well enough, to be sure, to the eye, but able to sting a man to death with their odious tongues! To-day is Wednesday. Steamboats, I believe, go every day. Thursday, that's to-morrow. I wish to heaven I could go to-morrow; but that I cannot do, because I have promised the priggish Mr. Horatio Timmsthakle to go to the French play with him. But I must speak about my linen from the laundress for Saturday. I will positively not stay in this detestable house a single moment longer than Saturday."

And having thus soothed his irritation, he stalked through the saloon into the hall, and out of the house, having encountered a negress in his way, to whom he gave strict orders that his linen should be in his room ready for packing by Friday night. This sort of notable thoughtfulness having been taught him by necessity, in consequence of his having, for the first time in his life since he left college, set off upon a journey without a servant; a piece of self-denial to which he was advised by one who knew by experience the effect of the United States upon an English domestic.

Mrs. Beauchamp and her daughter, meanwhile, mounted the stairs, and having reached one of the apartments sacred to their own use, the elderly lady closed the door of it, and making the fair Annie sit down near it, began to address her as follows:—

"I have something to tell you, my dear child, that will, I expect, go straight right away to your feelings as it did to mine. I know how you have been brought up, my daughter, and it is an out-and-out impossibility that you should not have all your high patriotic notions set blazing by what I am going to tell you."

Annie listened very attentively; but had she spoken the truth, and the whole truth, concerning what was passing at her heart, she would have said—"No more patriotism just now, dear mamma, if you please, because I have been working so hard at it, that I am right down tired." But of course she said nothing of the kind, and Mrs. Beauchamp went on—

"You know only too well, my dear child, how shamefully the United States have been abused, vilified, and be-littled by all the travellers who have ever set foot in them for the purpose of writing books about us. I don't say too much, do I, Annie, when I declare that this has positively amounted to a regular national calamity; and I'll give any one leave to judge what it must be to the feelings of a free people, who know themselves to be the finest nation in the world, to have one atrocious, unprincipled monster after another, come and write volumes upon volumes, in order to persuade the rest of the world that we are lots behind-hand with everybody, instead of being, as we really are, first and foremost of the whole world. Doesn't it drive one mad, Annie?"

"It drives one into very great anger, mamma," replied her daughter, with something like a sigh.

"Well, then, my darling, what will you say to my first-rate, unaccountable good luck, when I tell you that I have just been applied to by the most gentlemanlike European, to my fancy, that ever set foot in the States, to assist with my information, my feelings, and my opinions, in composing a work, the express object of which is to do justice, at last, to the Union?"

"And who, mamma, is the author you are to assist?"

"My dear, it is the lady the most striking and distinguished in appearance of the new party that came to the house yesterday. She looks like a woman of a very commanding intellect; and her husband has told me that she has been a most admired author for years in her own country, only that she is of too retired a character ever to have put her name to any of her works."

"Is it that enormously tall and stout woman, mamma?" demanded Annie.

"Yes, my dear, it is the lady who is the stoutest of the party; it is Mrs. Allen Barnaby."

"I should not have fancied her a particularly shy person," said Annie, gently.

"I must insist upon it, child," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, with a great deal of energy, "that you do not permit yourself to take up any absurd prejudices against this lady, who, I positively declare, seems sent by Heaven to do us justice. And remember, if you please, my daughter, how very little you know about the higher classes of people in England. Depend upon it, that whatever you see in her, which strikes you as being out of the common way, is just the greatest proof of her rank and fashion. You heard what she said yesterday about going to court? And though, as a citizen of a free country, I thought it my duty to put in my say against courts altogether, and all such-like abuses of the human intellect, nevertheless, I am not such a fool as to be ignorant that none but the very highest classes of all, are ever permitted to come within-side the walls that hold the queen; and though I hate and despise all such tyranny, it is quite right, in such a case as this, to remember all we do know of their abominable old-fashioned ways, in

order that we may understand a little what we are about, which is the way, you know, to avoid disagreeable blunders. I am sure nobody will suspect me, such a thorough-going patriot as I am, for being likely to have any over-great respect for queens and princes, and such like ; and I dare say, Annie, you heard the considerable sharp set down I gave her yesterday on that very subject ; but for all that, I know what I know ; and it is something, I can tell you, in the way of good luck, when one is getting a little close and familiar with an English family, to find that they have been at court. In course, our first feeling ought to be suspicion about everybody that is English ; and it is very convenient, by times, to get at the whole truth about people. Don't you think so, my dear ? ”

“ Yes, mamma, ” replied Annie, rather absently ; for indeed she was not much thinking of what her mother had said, having been occupied during nearly the whole time they had been together in endeavouring to recollect all she had said to Mr. Egerton, and was rather tormenting herself with the fear that she had not been sufficiently caustic and severe in her manner of treating him.

Luckily for the harmony of the dialogue (for Mrs. Beauchamp liked to be attended to), this indifference on the part of the young lady was not remarked, and her mother, still in the highest good humour, went on to explain a project she had conceived, by which every part of Mrs. Allen Barnaby's important work might be benefited by her information and superintendence.

“ And now, my dear, ” said she, “ I must make you acquainted with what I propose to do, and it is a great satisfaction, my daughter, for me to know that it is just exactly the very thing you will like best. You know, Annie, how often you have been at father and me about taking you to travel up and down a little, that you might see and know something of the glories of the Union, over and beyond what all my teaching could make you understand. Well, my dear, and you know, too, that I have always promised that travel you should to Washington and to Niagara, and, one after the other, to all the Atlantic cities if we could make it convene with father's will and pleasure. But up to this day, Annie, I have never been able to get anything better from him than just off and on sort of promises ; and his reason for putting it off so everlasting was, that though he loved you and I, too, a deal better than his eyes—and I am quite availed that he speaks no more than the truth when he says it—yet that for the soul of him he can't make up his mind to travel hither and yon, as he says we want to do, till we get east of sunrise, without a man companion for him to speak to—and that's why for he keeps us at boarding everlasting, which we two don't overmuch appreciate either of us. But just observe how the matter stands now. These smart, clever people, and a large party of 'em too, with two men, you see, are actually going right ahead to make the tour of the Union. And the major, the authoress lady's husband, loves a quiet game of piquet, father says, as well as he does himself. And that he found out last night when they

started off together, you know, after dinner. Now it does seem to me, Annie, that nothing ever did convene so perfect as this. Here's the lady come on purpose to write a book on the Union, but honestly confessing that she don't know the name of one State from another, and, in course, still less about all the remarkabilities of our glorious and immortal constitution, and other requirements for such a business, whether about ourselves or our works. Well! then there's me, ready and willing to supply all she wants, and though I say it that shouldn't, no ways badly qualified for that same business either, seeing that ever since I was a girl at college, I have been always celebrated for my patriotism, and had a heart in my bosom ready to fight for the stripes and the stars, if such a thing was wanted, as father has told me scores of times. Then next comes father himself—wanting and wishing of all things in creation to please his darling Annie by taking her a touring, but never having the heart to set out, on account of having nobody in the evening to take a cigar and a hand of cards with him. So then, to answer to that, comes the major, as ready to do both as the sun to rise in the morning. And then next, there's your darling beautiful self, my daughter, having your own heart's wish at last, and setting out on your travels for everlasting, stop you who can. Now what do you think of all this, Annie? Isn't it a pretty considerable piece of good fortune, daughter?—Say."

Annie had changed colour more than once during the progress of her mother's harangue, not a word of which escaped her, for the absent fit was quite gone. Had Mrs. Beauchamp been less completely occupied by her own share in the proposed arrangement, it is probable that she would have perceived that Annie's sensations in hearing them detailed were not of unmixed satisfaction; but partly because she was too intent upon all she had in her head to see very clearly what was before her eyes, and partly because she felt so very certain of her daughter's delight at the scheme, that she would scarcely have believed her in earnest had she objected to it, she perceived not these latent symptoms of dissatisfaction, and exclaimed, even before she answered—

"I knew you would be in raptures!"

Annie let it pass, and only smiled, which she certainly did the more easily, because a portion at least of the information she had received was decidedly agreeable, though she thought that if she had had the ordering of the scheme, things might have "convened" more perfectly to her satisfaction than they did at present.

Her objections, however, whatever they were, she kept to herself; and when she spoke at last, it was to say that she was very glad indeed, that she was going to see something more of the glorious and unrivalled country to which she had the honour of belonging, than merely Big-Gang Bank, Charles Town, New Orleans, and Natches.

"You are quite right, Annie, quite and entirely right," replied her mother. "I have been a great traveller in ;

very great traveller; and from my high connections in different States, have always been among people of the very first standing,—and to my mind,” she added, “no young lady’s education can be complete till she has pretty well seen the Union through. However, my dear, we have no great cause to complain of father either, as yet, for we must remember that you won’t be seventeen till fall, and so there is no great time lost. But there is one thing, Annie, that in a small way troubles me, and I will tell you what it is, my daughter, because I have a notion that you might give us a little help, if you’ll be clever enough to do what I wish.”

“What is it, mamma?” said Annie, with one of her beautiful smiles, “I am ready to do anything to please you.”

“That’s a jam girl—and this is it then. Those two elderly-looking women, you know, that have come along with this celebrated authoress, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, I can’t help having a fancy that they must be people of great consequence, because they are both of them so unaccountable ugly and stupid, that I don’t see the likelihood of any Christian soul taking the trouble of bringing them out all this eternity of a voyage if they were not; or, at any rate, they must be somebody that this new friend of mine, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, must think a good deal of, and of course would not like to have slighted. And the truth is, Annie, that as I know I shall have enough to do to fully enlighten the mind of the writing lady about the Union, I don’t look forward at all, I can tell you, to having any time to bestow upon them; and as to your father, his hatred to ugly old women is so great, that I expect nothing in creation would make him consent to my scheme, except just the pleasing you, and having his game of piquet from sun-down to bed-time, without having the trouble of trotting out to look for a play-fellow, which I calculate he abominates further than most things. This being the way the case lies, darling, what I want of you is, that you would just be a little conversable and genteel in your attentions to these two poor queer old souls. Will you, dear, as your share and payment for all the beautiful miles you are going to travel? Will you, Annie?—Say.”

“Certainly, mamma. If I am to travel with these English people, I will endeavour to be as civil to them as I can. But I expect they will find me very dull company, for it is rarely that I find much that I should like to say to any strangers, and especially to English. But don’t think I object, dear mamma; whenever I can find anything to say, it shall always be said to them.”

“Oh! but, Annie, you must be very civil to the major, and to his lady into the bargain, and also to the splendid-looking young lady, their daughter, and to the foreign gentleman, their son-in-law; or else, mercy on me! we shall be getting into a terrible scrape, I guess, and having Madam Barnaby saying in her book, that whatever the rest of the country may be, the young ladies are the most disagreeable and least elegant people throughout the Union. Don’t be doing anything to get that said, Annie!”

"Mamma! I will do my very best to please you," replied her daughter, very gravely; "but there is one thing that I will not promise, because in my heart I don't believe it is one that I could ever perform. I cannot promise you to speak very often to the married young lady, the daughter."

Mrs. Beauchamp frowned, and shook her head.

"I see by your looks, Annie," said she, "that you are getting into one of your obstinate fits, when you will pretend to know what people are better than your mother does, which of all impossibilities is the most impossible, and you a girl under sixteen! Now don't Annie, don't. There's a fine girl! Don't vex me, just when I am trying to do my very best to serve my dear persecuted country, and to please you into the bargain! It is very kind of you, Annie, very."

And poor Mrs. Beauchamp looked very much as if she was going to cry; but her beautiful daughter ran to her, and drew away every indication of the kind by a kiss.

"Trust me, mamma," she said, "I have promised you that I will do the best I can; and so I will. Shall I go this very minute and find out these Miss Perkinses?—that is the name, I expect, isn't it, mamma? Shall I go to them now, wherever they are, and ask them if they will take a walk in the balcony? I am sure it must be cooler than the room they have got, poor things; for Cleopatra told me that our sly lump of soft sodder, Mrs. Carmichael, had persuaded them to lodge themselves in a little hole of a garret looking exactly west, that she might keep a decent room vacant, in case any of her 'regular New Orleans Bows,' as she calls them, should offer themselves. I will go to them directly; shall I?"

"Yes, do, darling, and I will go too, and see if I can find my new friend, Mrs. Allen Barnaby."

"Pray, mamma," said Annie, rising to depart, "have you said anything to papa yet about your travelling scheme?"

"No, my dear, I have not," replied her mother, with a smile; "but that is only because I have had no opportunity. I don't see any opposition, Annie, there. You know, pretty well as I do, deary, that if I take care that the piquet and the toddy go right, nothing else is likely to go wrong."

Annie knew that as far as the word wrong meant opposition, her mother had the best possible grounds, namely, that furnished by many years' experience, for her confidence in having her own way; so she said no more, but walked off, shaking her head, however, rather mournfully as she went; for though she loved her mother, she loved her father too, and often regretted that his habitual indolence, which seemed to have absorbed everything like activity in his character, had permitted him to lay himself so completely on the shelf.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNIE was the first who succeeded in her quest, for she found the spinster sisters sitting most disconsolately in the great saloon, without even the semblance of an occupation, unless the ceaseless fanning of Miss Matilda could be called such, and by no means in a state of spirits to render any conversation they might have together soothing or consolatory to either party. As far as the exciting kind feelings in the breast of Miss Beauchamp could be advantageous to them, their palpable and evident forlornness was in their favour. She looked at them both for a moment, and felt that, English or not, they were thoroughly uncomfortable and forlorn, and had they sat with a pedigree in their hands (instead of a feather fan)—a pedigree proving them to be descended in a direct line from General Washington, she could not have smiled more sweetly, as she stepped forward to address them.

"I am afraid, ladies, you must find it very dull here," she said, seating herself opposite, and about midway between the two. "The New Orleans boarding-houses are not very famous for having many books, and it's so hot here in the daytime, that strangers hardly dare venture into the streets either to look for books or anything else. But mamma and I have plenty up stairs in our own rooms, and we shall be very happy to lend you some if you like it."

From the moment she entered, Miss Matilda, who had for many hours been meditating on the possibility of coaxing Mrs. Beauchamp (evidently the principal personage of the boarding-house set) into presenting them to some of her New Orleans friends, changed her attitude of ill-at-ease indolence, into one of fascinating animation, and she immediately replied—

"Thank you a thousand times, my dear Miss Beauchamp. How excessively kind and amiable! Yes, my dear Miss Beauchamp, I do indeed long for a few of the elegant indulgences to which I have ever been accustomed in my own country. Our residence is quite at the West End, and I am perfectly sure that you are sufficiently well informed to be aware, Miss Beauchamp, that in London nothing gives more decided fashion than that. In short, the fact is, that though I have no doubt in the world but that in a short time we shall like your country, and all the charming people in it excessively, yet just at this moment, that is, just at first, you know, we do find it rather dull."

Annie's only answer to this was a sort of acquiescent bow; and turning her eyes from the elegant speaker, she fixed them then, almost by accident, on the pale face of poor Louisa. That really worthy, but very unfortunate person, felt at the bottom of her heart that in securing her beloved sister from suicide, she had given up everything in the shape of worldly comfort and enjoyment

which had hitherto made her own life so desirable. And that sister was now looking so exceedingly ugly, old, and thin, that Miss Louisa, who watched her with all the tender solicitude of a mother, was falling fast into a profound melancholy, from the conviction, that though the promise she had extorted from her as the price of her own consent to this unhappy expedition, might secure her from self-slaughter, it would *not* secure her from *hating* the life so preserved; for as she gazed upon her long, pale, peevish face, she felt most miserably certain that no gentleman on God's earth, who was in his right senses, would ever think of such a thing as marrying her. When, therefore, Annie Beauchamp's eye fell upon her, her quiet and usually tranquil features were somewhat agitated by the thoughts that had taken possession of her mind, and her light gray eyes, which were not very large, had more tears in them than they could conveniently hold; but when she caught the glance of the young American fixed upon her, she made an effort to smile, and said, in an accent that spoke a good deal of gratitude—

"Indeed, young lady, you are very kind."

Annie immediately changed her seat for one that was close to her, and taking her hand, said, cheerfully—

"Now then, Miss Perkins, tell me what sort of a book you like best. Shall it be grave or gay? English or American? Prose or verse?"

"Any book," replied Miss Louisa, very considerably comforted at being addressed so kindly! "any book or newspaper in the world would certainly be greatly more agreeable than sitting with nothing at all to do, of any sort or kind. But the greatest kindness of all would be to give us something that my sister Matilda would like to read. She is a far greater reader than I am at all times, my pleasure being more in seeing that everything is tidy and comfortable at home. But poor Matilda is very fond of a novel, and if you chanced to have a pretty love story that she never happened to meet with before, I do think it would go further to raise up her spirits than anything. And if I could but see her looking a little happy again it would quite set me up."

Annie rose with the intention of immediately ransacking her little collection for love; but, as far as her own feelings were concerned, it was greatly more for the sake of the elder sister, than for the gratification of the younger; but Miss Matilda stopped her ere she reached the door, exclaiming—

"Oh! do not go, my dear Miss Beauchamp! A little of your delightful conversation will do me more good than all the novels in the world. My elder sister is one of the very best and most ladylike people in the world, I do assure you; though at present, of course, you see her to a disadvantage, so very little dressed as she is, and all that; but though she is quite superior as to her *fortune* and station in life, and all those sort of advantages—
I won't pretend that at her age she would be likely to

comfortable chat with a young person like you in the same way that I should do. I need not point out to you the difference there is between us in age; it is quite extraordinary, isn't it? A great many people won't believe that we are sisters. But I was going to say that if you happen to have a newspaper, there is nothing in the world that Louisa likes so well; and then while she is poring over that, you and I can talk."

Miss Beauchamp answered not a word to this, and we have therefore no right, perhaps, to be less discreet concerning her feelings than she was herself; but though she spoke not, she bit her beautiful under-lip severely, and if she had been sufficiently imprudent to speak at all, it would have been in a manner but little likely to assist the object confided to her by her mamma. She appeared, however, to be entirely occupied by taking a thorn out of her finger, and turned to the window in order to attain the degree of sight necessary to this delicate operation; and then, after the delay of a moment, she again turned to leave the room, saying that she would return again in a moment.

"What a kind, sweet-tempered young thing!" said Miss Louisa, as soon as the door was closed.

"A very nice girl indeed," replied her sister. "Her eyes are rather too large, and her hair too abundant, and too dark, to satisfy my ideas of perfect feminine beauty; but nevertheless she is certainly very pretty looking, and most uncommonly agreeable, considering she has never seen London, nor even Cheltenham or Brighton. I hope we shall become exceedingly intimate, for I think we shall suit exactly. I have got dreadfully tired of poor dear Patty, and that's the truth, though of course I don't mean to let any of 'em find it out. But, upon my word, it is enough to make anybody sick, hearing her run on so everlasting about her husband; and, to tell you the truth, Louisa, I am terribly afraid her husband begins to think so too; for it is not once, nor twice either, that I have seen him yawn as if his jaws would crack, when she has been kissing him; and it is plain enough, poor thing, that she does not at all approve his taking so much notice of any one else, for I have got some terrible sour looks from her on board ship when he has ventured to come where I was standing to watch the flying fish, or anything of that kind. Away she was, after him in a minute. But I am sure she need not have been afraid, for the very last thing I should ever think of doing would be encouraging the attentions of a friend's husband."

"Oh! dear no! I am sure you would not do any such thing as that, Matilda," said her sister, looking rather surprised and shocked at the suggestion; "but I can't say——"

Here she was interrupted by the return of Annie, with three thin volumes of unmistakable circulating library complexion in one hand, and a gray-tinted newspaper in the other. Setting the books down on a table by which she passed, Miss Beauchamp approached the meek Louisa with a newspaper.

"I am afraid this will not entertain you so well as a London newspaper would do, Miss Perkins; but at least you will find on half-column down here that is all about England, and you must not be angry if you do not find it very civil, because our newspaper people think there is no opportunity of serving their own country at once so profitable and so cheap as by abusing yours."

This was said in a tone and spirit so very different from that in which, a short hour or so before, the same young lady had discoursed on the subject of England to Mr. Egerton, that any person, hearing both, may be well tempted to accuse her of inconsistency; and really I know no defence for her, save that she was a young lady—a class which from long usage, by this time grown into something like prescriptive privilege, holds itself exempt from the necessity of always being of the same opinion.

"I am very much obliged to you, indeed," said Miss Louisa, receiving the odd-looking pages with a smile of genuine pleasure and gratitude. "It is so very kind of you to think about me!"

And while Annie still stood beside her, she turned her eyes to the paper, and began reading it, to show, perhaps, that she really did take great interest in a newspaper. The first, and indeed as it seemed, the only thing which particularly attracted her attention, however, on the present occasion, was a succession of little dingy pictures, one of which appeared to adorn every paragraph in the page which first happened to meet her eye.

"What are all these little men running meant for?" said Miss Louisa, looking up very innocently in the face of her new friend. "Is it to make the newspaper look pretty?"

Annie laughed.

"No, Miss Perkins," she replied, "neither the portraits nor the originals of these running gentry are counted very pretty in the United States. No! these figures are intended for use, not ornament; they are placed there to call the attention of the reader to the advertisement which follows, which is always about some runaway slave or other, and is to give notice that any one who finds him or her—for the ladies sometimes run as well as the gentlemen—is to catch them, and send them back to their owners."

Miss Louisa, though, as I have said, a very worthy woman, was not a very well-informed one, and knew as little about the great transatlantic subject of negro slavery as most people. Nevertheless she had heard of such a thing, and in a general way considered it, like the rest of the European world, men, women, and children, to be something exceedingly atrocious and unchristian. Without the very slightest affectation, therefore, for there was no such thing in her, she shuddered visibly, as her beautiful companion uttered the above words, and exclaimed involuntarily, "Oh dear! oh dear! how very shocking that sounds!"

Miss Beauchamp coloured slightly, and turned away.

"I have brought you some books, ma'am," she said, addressing herself to Matilda, after the silence of a moment. "Fare!"

I cannot stay with you any longer, but I am obliged to be up stairs."

Miss Matilda began a flourishing speech, about sorrow at losing her, and gratitude for her books, but before she had half finished the young lady had given them both a valedictory nod, and disappeared. The situation of both sisters was, however, essentially improved. Louisa had not only her newspaper to read, which, despite its melancholy pictures, was a great deal better than nothing, but she had also the great, the very great consolation, of seeing her sister look ten years younger, and twenty times less discontented, than before the fair Annie had paid them her unexpected visit, and before she had got three volumes of native manufactory, concerning love and matrimony, to read. Nor did these favourable symptoms altogether disappear even when she discovered that her book, though exceedingly interesting, was not without its faults, the greatest of which, in her eyes, was the gross absurdity committed by the author in introducing his heroine, as already in the perfection of beauty at the ridiculous age of sixteen! This blunder so strongly affected her that she actually began to think aloud, and exclaimed, without any intention of consulting her sister on the subject, "What a pity to spoil the whole interest by such nonsense as that! Any rational person, who knows anything of human nature, must be constantly expecting to hear of her being whipped and put to bed for some childish naughtiness or other. There is but one way of my finding any interest in the story, I am quite sure, and that way I shall take, for it seems beautifully written, and full of the most touching sentiments—I shall just consider it a misprint, and correct sixteen into six-and-twenty at the very least."

Perhaps at the bottom of her heart might have lurked the thought that to produce the perfection of full-grown female sensibility another ten years might have been added, with very manifest advantage to the interest and the truth of the story.

But notwithstanding these drawbacks of young love on the one hand, and negro slavery on the other, both the sisters felt themselves considerably better than they had done since they landed on the shores of the United States.

The position, meanwhile, of the real heroine of these pages was still more essentially improved. At the same time that her daughter went to visit the Miss Perkinses, Mrs. Beauchamp, by the aid of the black waiting-maid, Cleopatra, sought and found the retreat of Mrs. Allen Barnaby. The major having, as usual, wandered to a billiard-table, his lady was left in undisturbed possession of "her chamber," and was employing herself at the moment her new friend entered, in preparing for her important literary undertaking, being in the act of writing down, in a little blank-paper book, which she had just sewed up for the purpose, the heads of various subjects to which she immediately intended to direct her attention. Nothing could exceed the pleasure she felt at seeing Mrs. Beauchamp, except what she expressed. She immediately

laid down her pen, and hastening towards her, performed a ceremonious courtesy, while she frankly extended her hand, which was intended to typify and express, as it were, all the stately dignity of the old world, combined with the unsophisticated cordiality of the new.

"I hope I don't break in upon you, ma'am, at a time that don't convene?" said Mrs. Beauchamp. "I see that you are already got to your writing, which agrees with what your good gentleman told me, but now, was the employment as was most likely to occupy you just at the present."

"And for that very reason, my dearest Mrs. Beauchamp," replied the animated Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "I am enchanted beyond what I am able to express, at your having the excessive kindness to call on me. It is here only, Mrs. Beauchamp, in the retirement of my own apartment, that such a visit can be duly appreciated. I dare say my excellent husband, Major Allen Barnaby—one of the best of men, Mrs. Beauchamp—I dare say he may have ventured to hint to you that my purpose in coming to this most interesting of countries is, in effect, to do the very exact thing of which you were so eloquently speaking last night?"

"Yes, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, he has indeed, ma'am," replied the visitor, "and I can't say but what I heard the news with very particular pleasure, seeing that you are a lady so every way qualified to perform the work proposed, with honour to yourself, and satisfaction to those about whose concerns it is your intention to instruct the world. And if you do this, ma'am, you will have the glory of achieving just what nobody else that has tried, has ever been able to do yet."

"If I should indeed be so happy," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, modestly casting her eyes upon the ground, "I feel sure that I shall owe it to you. I certainly did come to this country solely for the purpose of writing upon it; but I always felt, even when most eager to undertake the task, that I must fail as so many others have done before me, unless I had the good fortune to form an acquaintance with some accomplished person of my own sex, who should be induced to assist me by counsel and information, such as, of course, none but a native can give."

"And it is that very thought of yours, ma'am, I will venture to say, that will certify your success," replied her new friend. "It is just exactly what nobody has ever done before, and it is for that very reason, I expect, that no traveller has ever yet produced a book upon the Union that can justly be called fit to be read."

"Heaven grant that by your assistance I may avoid their errors!" cried Mrs. Allen Barnaby, fervently casting her eyes towards the ceiling of the room. "I can safely say that no one ever undertook a task which caused greater anxiety, or a more ardent desire of success."

"There is no doubt of it, Mrs. Allen Barnaby—~~and~~ whatever, of your success I mean, nor of all the reward

world and the next, which you will so well deserve to receive," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, with an ardour which was considerably more sincere than that of her companion. "You will, indeed, have every advantage," she resumed, "for not only will you see things without prejudice by being made to understand them really as they are, but from having been in the habit of writing so much in the old country you must have got the knack of it, as we say, and will find the work come to your hand quite easy, I expect."

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, I have written a good deal," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a modest, meditative air; "and though during several years of certainly very successful publication a feeling of timidity, perhaps too long indulged, has prevented my ever meeting the public, face to face as I may call it, under my real name, I cannot now, as you well observe, feel any of the difficulties of a mere novice. I shall, on the contrary, set about my task with that delightful sensation of confidence which conscious ability I believe always gives. Do not impute vanity to me, my dear madam, from my saying this; but the fact is, that it would be the most contemptible affectation were I to pretend ignorance of the admiration which my writings have produced. I have never published anything, I can truly say from the moment I first handled a pen, without its meeting the most brilliant success, and it would show a great want of common sense on my part were I to pretend now to fear that I should fail, and with such a theme too!"

"It would, indeed, be folly for any one to suppose such a thing possible," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, "but yet, I cannot help thinking," she added, after the meditation of a minute or two, "I cannot help thinking, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that you might bring your work forward in a superior sort of style, as I may say, if you would just consent to put in the title-page, 'by the author of,'—whatever previous works of yours have had the greatest success. I really would strongly advise you to think again and again of this, before you finally make up your mind against it."

"Do not mention the subject to me again, I entreat of you, Mrs. Beauchamp," returned the European lady, with some slight display of impatience. "You know not, to be sure it is impossible that you should know, how eternally I have been—I may say—persecuted in England with the same request, and, having resisted the most earnest entreaties of persons of station even too high for me to venture to name, can you really think that I ought to yield to any other? I feel quite certain that when you have thought a little more about it, Mrs. Beauchamp, and when you have brought yourself to recollect that there *are* in our country persons—or at any rate *one* person—whom it is by no means easy to refuse, you will perceive and acknowledge the necessity of my continued reserve."

"Why, as to that, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," returned the republican lady, "I have no great notion of any one person being such

a vast long way before all the rest as you seem to make out, and to say the truth, I can't realise to myself the possibility of an elegant smart woman as you are, being chained up in that way, as I may call it, by any one. Why, there's our president, not he's first and foremost in course, because it has been our will and pleasure to make him so; but, Lord bless your soul, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, he might ask any one of us to do anything from July's eternity, and it would never come into our heads to do it unless indeed for some profitable object of our own, which is quite another thing, and what all sensible men will calculate upon daily at all times. But for giving way to him for any other reason, he may march from Washington very considerably east of sun, before he will find anybody ready to do any such manna. However, we won't talk any more about politics just at present, and, instead of it, I want you to show me what you have jotted down there."

And Mrs. Beauchamp, with a little natural and natural curiosity, did just peep at the foolscap page which lay, half filled in large characters, after the manner of a list, before Mrs. Allen Barnaby. That lady's MS. however was not, as it seemed, yet ready for examination, for, with a good deal of dignified mystery, she laid a blank sheet over that upon which she had written, and said, "Not yet, dearest Mrs. Beauchamp, not yet, if you please, though this very paper, which I now conceal, is written expressly that I may communicate it to you. But as yet I am not fully prepared to do it. It will contain, when filled up, a list of questions to be addressed to yourself, on the particular themes that I shall consider it most necessary to touch upon in the course of my work; and may I not hope that you will kindly condescend to answer them?"

"And that's just what my very heart is longing and burning to do," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, her handsome face in a glow of patriotic excitement; "and I do hope it won't be long before you are ready to begin."

"If any immediate arrangements for our being a good deal together can be made, my dearest lady, I should be ready to begin our important consultations directly. In short, the major has promised to bring me home several whole quires of paper to-day, besides a large quantity of pens, and a bottle of ink. So you may see, my dear madam, from my giving him such a commission, that I have no intention to delay the business. However, I charged him to buy the paper at different shops, for fear of creating suspicion of what I was about. I always took the same precaution in London, when I began a new work."

"Dear me! Did you really? How very cautious!" And then, her curiosity whetted anew by this allusion to mystery, Mrs. Beauchamp once more ventured to return to the forbidden subject, and added, "Do now, just tell me the name of the least and tiniest of all your books!"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby coloured violently through her

for a moment felt convinced that the interesting history of her anonymous fame was suspected; but when she ventured to look again at the animated countenance of Mrs. Beauchamp, she perceived, with the greatest possible satisfaction, that she was altogether mistaken. Nothing was to be seen there but the most respectful admiration, excepting indeed that little imp-like sparkle of curiosity, which peeped out of her eyes, and which, under the circumstances, would certainly have been pardonable in any daughter of Eve, but in a transatlantic one the want of it would have been nothing less than unnatural. Mrs. Allen Barnaby, therefore, again rallied her spirits, and played off with great ability the part of an embarrassed and somewhat agitated *incognita*, to whom the removal of the veil would be excessively distressing, while the preserving it was exceedingly difficult. At length the scene reached its climax by her putting her handkerchief to her eyes, and exclaiming, "Spare me! my dearest Mrs. Beauchamp! spare me! The time shall come when I will have no reserves with you; but your own admirable judgment must tell you that just at this moment, when my nerves are naturally shaken by the contemplation of an undertaking which I feel to be almost awfully important, there would be great weakness in my suffering my spirits to be agitated by my making a disclosure which, I am well aware, would at once bring upon me the eyes of all America, as well as of all Europe. I implore you, therefore, for the present, to make no further allusion to my former writings, but rather let us employ the precious minutes with which you favour me by arranging how I can in the most effectual manner be thrown into the circle among which you usually live, in order to catch as much as possible, your views and opinions upon all subjects."

"Well, then," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, with the most perfect good humour, "I expect I won't plague you one bit more at present, as you say, about the works that have made your false name so celebrated. Not but what I'd give one of my fingers to know what the name was. However, we will say no more about it now; and instead of it I will tell you what my scheme is for our passing as much time together as possible. I calculate, in course, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that your plan in writing upon the Union, is to travel through all the most celebrated and wonderful parts of it?"

"Most assuredly," replied the authoress, with decision.

"Well then, my plan is to travel too," returned Mrs. Beauchamp; "because then, you know, as the things come in all their glory before our eyes, I can explain them to you, and make you realise their particular excellence at the first blush, as I may say. What do you say to that plan, Mrs. Allen Barnaby?"

"That it is the most admirable, the most perfect, the most inconceivably kind that could possibly have entered your head, and that so inspired, I must be dull indeed if I fail. But what does the colonel and your beautiful daughter say to it, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp?"

"Oh! Annie is delighted. She has long been dying for travelling frolic; and she undertakes to do the honours to your friends, which will leave us to our studies, you know. As to the colonel, to say the truth, I have not yet mentioned the subject to him; but he is, I do expect, the very best man alive, and I am sure he will make no objection, provided the major can smoke a cigar and play a game of piquet. Can he, Mrs. Allen Barnaby?"

"The major is very fond of smoking," replied our heroine; "and I rather think too," she added, gently, "that he now and then likes a game at piquet."

"Well, then, I will answer for all the rest," resumed the energetic Mrs. Beauchamp, her patriotic ardour animating her even to her fingers' ends, which were already itching, as she said, to be at her packing. "The colonel will be back in a few minutes to take his morning iced julep, and then I will tell him all about it."

Mrs. Beauchamp was by no means "talking without her hat," when she said that if the major smoked cigars, and played piquet, she could answer for all the rest. Of course she was too clever a woman not to know how to set the thing properly before the eyes of her husband. She said little or nothing to him concerning her project of redeeming the reputation of the United States, and undoing all the mischief which former travellers had perpetrated against this rudely-treated portion of the earth's surface, by taking the pen of Mrs. Allen Barnaby under her especial influence and control. She said little or nothing of all this, because she knew that, although her husband was, as a matter of course, an excellent patriot (what American is not?), yet nevertheless, the sluggish circulation of his blood, which, without greatly injuring his bodily health, had reduced his mental energies very nearly to the condition of those of a dormouse, prevented his greatly enjoying any long discussions on the subject. What she chiefly dwelt upon, therefore, was the great delight which his darling Annie would enjoy from travelling in the society of this very distinguished English party, and also the providential circumstance of their meeting with a gentleman who could both smoke cigars and play piquet, and thus render the performance of his long-given promise of taking his daughter "about a little," a matter of pleasure instead of annoyance.

"Very well, my dear," was the colonel's first answer; "manage it just as you like. If it's a good boat I shall be quite ready to start."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Major Allen Barnaby learned from his wife that the travelling party, to be composed in the manner already agreed upon by the two ladies, was actually arranged, he smiled very good-humouredly, and said—

“That’s all very well, my Barnaby, and a capital hand you are to set a machine in action. But you don’t quite calculate, do you—as these curious fellows say—upon my being ready to pack up, and to go away at a moment’s warning? You do not in sober earnest expect that, do you?”

These words

Of doubt and dread

came like a thunderbolt—or rather like an avalanche, for nothing could be more *chilling*—on the ears and heart of poor Mrs. Allen Barnaby. Never having been from her earliest infancy in the habit of doubting her own powers, she had no sooner fully conceived the scheme of writing a book, than a well assured and very brilliant success immediately rose before her mind’s eye, as being perfectly certain, and that, too, no mere idle, windy, wordy success, born in the drawing-room, and buried on the staircase, but solid, profitable, money-getting success, that might do as much to help them forward, or very nearly so, as one of the major’s best games at piquet in Curzon-street; and overlooking the possibility that her husband’s view of the case might not be precisely the same as her own, she felt as much shocked and disappointed at hearing him thus speak to her as if he had suddenly declared that he meant to turn hermit, and for the future should require no money at all.

The dismay expressed by her countenance was so great, and, to say the truth, so comical, that the major for one moment laughed outright. But this was a species of amusement that, upon principle, he rarely indulged in, and before the fire which he saw mounting to his lady’s eyes had fully flashed upon him, the foolish fit was over, and his laugh exchanged for a smile of the most amiable domestic amenity.

“Come, come, wife,” said he, “you must not take what I say too gravely, either, and I cannot help laughing when I see you getting it into your head that I mean to take up my dwelling in this cursed place and remain here to be broiled everlastingly. Set your heart at rest upon that point, my Barnaby. If you are in such haste to be off, it’s lucky for you, perhaps, that the set here are just what they are. Why, my dear, will you believe it, I don’t think that out of the thirty or forty playing-men, that I have ever tried myself, or watched others try, I don’t believe that out the whole number there’s half a dozen that isn’t as keen wit!

as myself—you understand me? Now that won't do, you know, by any means. What's good play, or a sharp eye, or the help of Fortunino, or anything else, with such a set of fellows? The difference between London and New Orleans seems to be just this:—On our side of the water there's a population of *flats*, with just a respectable sprinkling of *sharps* among them to keep men from going to sleep, and sinking into absolute stupidity. But here, upon my honour and soul, the whole population, old and young, strikes me as being *sharps*, with such a scanty supply of *flats* amongst them, as it breaks one's spirit to think of. And as for the diamond-cut-diamond sort of business, that is carried on here, it would not suit me at all. I am not used to it, and I am not quite so young as I was, my dear, and ceaseless, never-ending hard work don't suit me. I won't say but what I might be a match for them if I tried hard for it, but the profit would be little or none, for after a fair trial between me and most of 'em, I am greatly mistaken if we should not one and all come to pretty nearly the same conclusion, and that would just be to let one another alone."

"But how do these gentlemen make the thing; answer themselves, my dear Donny?" demanded his wife, with her usual shrewdness.

"Why, I suppose, by watching for every new arrival, like a hawk after a dead body," he replied; "but that would never answer for us, my dear Barnaby. Besides, if it did, they would get so confounded jealous of me, being an Englishman, that I should have no peace of my life. No, wife, I shan't stay here, I promise you—you have no reason to be terrified by that notion."

"But you have not lost anything to speak of yet, have you, my dear?" said she, her own satisfaction at the idea of their departure being for a moment lost sight of, in her domestic anxiety for the well-doing of every member of her beloved family. "You have not paid very dear, I hope, for what you have learned?"

"No, my dear," he replied, "that is not my way, and I should have thought you might have guessed as much. No; I thought I detected something the first night, just before the party broke up, that looked a *little* like a determination to let me win, but I was not sure of it; so last night I became a good deal more heedless and gay-hearted, you see, than before, and then I saw—ay, and heard, too—what put me up to them. Why, they had found me out in no time, and all their scheming was not to get the better of me, but to get me dropped out of one or two *set-to* games they had been planning, where they had got something like a novice to work at. So I very quietly let them have their way about it, and I think that puzzled them again a little. But that's only the fun of a moment, mind you, and would not last, I'll engage for it, long enough to make me sure of a dozen dollars. However, we can't suppose, you know, that they are all finished up in this kind of way in every part of the Union, and further on I hope we'll

better, my Barnaby. I shall do very well, by-and-by, I dare say, so don't look uneasy about it."

"Heaven grant we may fare better; my dear!" replied his wife; "for confident as I am of the success of my work, it will by no means do, Donny, for us all to depend upon it, you know."

"No, my dear," said he, very demurely, "I don't think it will. Nevertheless, wife, I do not intend, mind you, to set off post haste, just after what happened last night. They would understand it exactly as well as you do, and a little better too, perhaps, for you will be thinking, naturally enough, that your book has something to do with it; while they'd know, well enough, every mother's son of them, that coming out here to see what I could do, I had met with my match, and was off to find game less wild elsewhere; and I'll leave you to judge the sort of *introduction* that would follow after me. So, if you please, my dear love, we will not start in a bustle, and you must please to tell your new friend, Mrs. Beauchamp; who, I suspect, manages her husband more completely than even you do yours, my Barnaby, that you intend to begin your examination of their magnificent country *here*, and you may ask her, if you will, to introduce you about a little. Everybody seems to know them, and I am told that Beauchamp has the finest estate and the largest gang of slaves in all Carolina."

However well Mrs. Allen Barnaby might manage her Donny, she knew what "if you please, my dear love," meant, as well as an old mare on a common knows the length of her tether; and she, therefore, hazarded not one word of objection to this prolonged abode at New Orleans, though she not only longed, with extreme impatience, to set off on the progress which her new friend had sketched out to her in such inviting colours, but she also earnestly desired to remove herself from an atmosphere where she was perpetually uttering prayers, the very reverse of *Hamlet's*, and wishing that her too, too melting flesh were more solid, and *not* thawing and dissolving itself into dew, as it did at present. There was, however, something in the idea of being introduced into New Orleans society by a person whom everybody knew, and who had the finest estate and largest gang of slaves in Carolina, which was very consolatory, and like a wise woman, she immediately fixed her thoughts, and brought her conversation to bear on this most agreeable portion of her husband's discourse.

"That is a capital good idea of yours, major," said she, "about asking Mrs. Beauchamp to introduce us, as if just for the purpose, you know, of enabling me to describe the society in my book. And with that notion in her head, she will pick out the very best and genteelst, see if she don't."

"I have no doubt of it," he replied, with a sagacious nod; "and I shall choose, my dear, to be included in this *visiting*, for I know of old, that New Orleans is accounted one of the first places for play, of its size, anywhere; and that makes me think that it's likely enough, coming here as a stranger, with my family and all,

so very respectable and domestic, I may do better in these drawing-rooms for the time we stay, than I have any chance of doing among the regular set at the gaming-tables. So I don't care how soon you set about talking to her on this subject; and you may say, you know, that in a new place, as this is to you, it has always been your rule to go nowhere unaccompanied by your 'excellent husband.' You understand me?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly, my dear; and I'll do the thing as it ought to be done, you may depend upon it. But, I say, Donny dear, there is no occasion, is there, for me to take those poor dear lanky-looking Perkinses with me, everywhere? It will be all very well when we are in lodgings anywhere that we should all be together, because if it's the same here as in London, that makes a great difference in paying for the drawing-room; but it will be a dreadful bore, won't it, if we can never go out anywhere without them? I am sure I don't know who'll ever ask us."

"On that point, my dear, I have not a word to say," replied the major, shaking his head. "It is one of those female, lady-like mysteries with which I positively can have nothing to do. It was you, my dear, and your daughter Patty, that arranged their coming with us, and now, if you like it, you may arrange that they shall be sent back again. If you had requested to bring Mother Redcap I should have consented, provided she could have paid her expenses, and if you had her here, I should let you do precisely what you liked with her. But I must not be plagued about it, Mrs. Barnaby."

"No more you shall, dear; I'll manage all that. And now be off with you, there's a good man, for I shall have Mrs. Beauchamp knocking at my door in a minute, and by what I hear the boarding ladies say to one another, they would be shocked dreadfully to find you here."

"Shocked to find me in my own room, wife?" said the major, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, they would indeed. It does seem droll, to be sure; but Mrs. Beauchamp says that every lady's *chamber*, as she calls it, is considered in all the boarding-houses, the genteelst place to receive company, lady company of course, and therefore that their husbands are never permitted there."

"Well then, I'm off. I'll just ramble about a little among the billiard-tables this morning, but I shall be devilish careful how I play. So you must not be over anxious, my dear."

* * * * *

The sociable anticipations of Mrs. Allen Barnaby were not disappointed, for hardly had the major disappeared before, as she had predicted, the gentle, lady-like knock of Mrs. Beauchamp was heard at the door. The well-pleased tenant of the "chamber," confined not her welcome to the ordinary words "come in," but ~~had~~ ^{she} the door, threw it open to its widest extent, and did ev

that smiles, nods, hand-pressings, and rejoicing expletives could do, to prove the delight which the visit gave her.

The two ladies then seated themselves on a comfortable sofa, and smilingly began to compare notes on the explanatory interviews they had had with their respective husbands, since their conversation of the preceding morning. Both declared that, far from finding any difficulty, the plan they had formed had met with the most cordial approbation from the gentlemen, both concluding her agreeable statement nearly in the same words, namely, "I must say that whenever I particularly wish any thing, the colonel (or the major) very rarely opposes me."

And then, having reached this point, Mrs. Allen Barnaby said, quite as a matter of course, that some short time however must be given to becoming better acquainted with the charming town they were in, for that it would be dreadful to write a book on America, and find nothing to say of so very fine a city as New Orleans.

"God bless my soul! I never thought of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp, with the look and voice of a sincere penitent. "Most perfectly true! to be sure, most perfectly true! I shall never forgive myself, I do think, for ever dreaming that you could start as we talked, right away up the river, with never a word said of such a glory of a city as New Orleans! I expect I had better not tell this tale against myself at Mrs. Carmichael's dinner table, or I shall get more sour looks than would be at all agreeable. However, we'll both of us remember the proverb, 'least said is soonest mended,' and never say a word about it; you understand me, my dear lady? Yes, to be sure you must, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," she continued, after meditating a moment, "you must see the theatres, both French and American; and the glorious quays, and the magnificent levee, and we must get to the place where you'll be sure to see the most steamboats together, such a sight as you never saw before, I calculate. And then the market! Oh, such a market! every individual thing coming by the river, and no other earthly way, so smooth, such a current, and so unaccountable beautiful! And then there will be the shops. You London ladies will find the difference between these shops and yours, I expect; for here it is altogether one and the same thing as if you went into the shops at Paris, even down to the talking French behind the counters, which we calculate gives a very genteel air to the town, being foreign-like without being English, which is what, as you want to know everything, you will excuse me for saying, we prefer. But I have little or no doubt, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that when your book appears, such a book as, between us, I am sure we shall be able to make it, all those little unpleasant feelings will wear away, and you will come to be quite as popular among us as the French themselves."

"Heaven grant your delightful prophecy may come true, my dear madam," returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, every feature, as she listened, expressive of attention and deep respect. "That it should

prove so, is, I may truly say, the first and dearest wish of my heart! But it seems to me, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, that notwithstanding the many interesting things you have mentioned, you have omitted one that is almost, I think, the most important of all."

"Have I, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp, looking in so degree displeased by the remark. "But I have no doubt you are right; it is indeed a great deal more likely that you should be right than not, for this country, from end to end, is so crowded full of wonders, of one sort or another, that I expect one must have a most unaccountable good memory not to forget some of them. But tell me, my dear lady, what is the particular thing you mean?"

"It is your own fault, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp," replied the anxious inquirer, "if I do think it the most important of all," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a very charming smile. "If I had never seen or conversed with you, I might not perhaps have been so very desirous of acquiring the power of describing the SOCIETY of the country. This is it, which I must confess strikes me as the most important feature of all, especially in such sort of work as that which I intend to produce."

"And you are right, I guess, as sure as there's a sun in heaven. No doubt about it; and what in the world I could be thinking of to suppose you could begin, even for a single page, without that, is more than I can guess, I promise you. I suppose I thought that was sure to come as a matter of course. And so I suppose it would, in the long run, but you are a deal more smart and thoughtful than I am in turning your mind to it from the very first. Luckily there's no time lost as yet, however, and a few notes of my writing to some of the people of first standing in the town, will settle the matter at once."

"I know not," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with much feeling, while her joyous heart fluttered in her bosom, as she remembered the trunks full of fine furbelowed dresses she had brought from London, "indeed I know not how I can ever thank you enough for all the trouble you are taking for me! All I can say is, that you will not find an ungrateful heart."

"All I can do, and ten times more, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, may be out and out repaid, I expect, if you will but exert your talents for us," replied Mrs. Beauchamp. "All I want in return is that you should portray us out to the world for just what we really are, and that is the finest nation upon the surface of God's whole earth, and as far ahead in civilisation of Europe in general, and England in particular, as the summer is before winter in heat."

"On that point fear nothing," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a sort of concentrated earnestness that seemed quite sublime to Mrs. Beauchamp; "my bosom seems to have received a spark from yours, and glows warmly, and I trust brightly, with it, reaching the world where to look for and where to find God."

is noblest in man. But tell me, my dear friend, permit me to call you so, tell me in what style do the ladies dress at the parties to which you so kindly propose introducing us? Will feathers be considered as too full dress? I have many sets that are exceedingly magnificent, but on this point I shall really wish to be entirely guided by you."

"Well, then, ma'am, I may say in return, that for the most part the ladies of New Orleans don't consider any dress whatever as too elegant for their parties; and provided your feathers come from Paris, I don't in the least question but what they will be very much approved. Perhaps, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as we are on such comfortable and clever terms together, you might not object to my just looking over your dresses? It is what we American ladies don't at all scruple to ask from one another, and I expect that there's few females to be found anywhere as better understands the thing than we do."

* * * * *

It was quite impossible that Mrs. Beauchamp could have made any request with which Mrs. Allen Barnaby would have complied with greater pleasure. Partly by the aid of the ready money which had floated round them during their few months' prosperous abode in London, and partly from the credit which had resulted from it, Mrs. Allen Barnaby had contrived to "*rig herself out*," as she called it, with a prodigious quantity of fine clothes. Nearly the first thought which crossed her mind when informed by her husband that she must prepare to cross the Atlantic, was *how* she should be able to convey these treasures with her. She had pulled them, and caused them to be pulled forth from their various repositories, and probably any woman of nerves less firm than her own would, on seeing the accumulation, have abandoned the idea of conveying them ALL with her as a thing impossible. But not so my heroine. As we are told is often the case with the noblest minds, difficulties on such an occasion as this, only seemed to generate strength throughout her whole frame. A new, a very new and original thought struck her as she gazed at the masses of velvet and satin piled around her in her Curzon-street bed-room, on the afternoon of the day which succeeded her celebrated ball. For one short moment indeed her spirit seemed overwhelmed, and she muttered the word "impossible!" But in the next the thought above alluded to suggested itself. She fell into an attitude of deep meditation. The fore-finger of her left hand pressed to her forehead, the right hand extended as if to forbid the approach of any one to interrupt her, and her eyes closed. For a few minutes she stood thus silently and wholly absorbed, then arousing herself from the sort of trance into which she seemed to have fallen, she said to the Abigail, who stood staring at her, "Where were all the hampers put, that brought in the wine which your master ordered when we first came into the house?"

"I don't rightly know, I'm sure, ma'am," replied the woman, "but I somehow think they are in the coal-hole."

"Coal-hole!" repeated her mistress with a natural shudder. "You mean one of the cellars, I suppose, you vulgar creature. Such a house as this has no coal-hole. Just go to the linen press up stairs and bring down all the sheets and table-cloths you can find, ay, and all the towels too. Make haste, I shall be back in a minute."

A mind of less intense energy would probably have contented itself by issuing orders for an examination of the contents of the coal-cellar, but that of Mrs. Allen Barnaby was differently constituted. She penetrated herself to the dusky and dusty region, herself held high the candle, which enabled her to reconnoitre its contents, and herself witnessed the drawing forth of hamper after hamper from its remotest corner. A mind of less intense energy, too, might, considering the purpose to which she desired to apply these hampers, have shrunk and felt appalled at the dingy condition in which she found them. But no weakness of the kind shook, even for a moment, her firm and steadfast purpose. She bade the cook, the page, and the coachman, who all stood staring at her from the area, to lug them out, and then she bade them take sundry brooms and brush them, and then she bade them use the handles of the said brooms to beat and shake them, and finally she bade them take them all, being eight in number, and of a goodly size, their straw abstracted from within, and the coal dust, as far as might be, from without, to her own sleeping apartment and there deposit them. The menials wondered, but obeyed. This done, she quickly followed the eight hampers, and quickly was rewarded too, by finding how perfect was the success of her expedient. Guarded by the linen wrappers in which, with all the tenderness of a fond parent, she herself enveloped her treasures, she gradually saw her satins, her silks, her laces, and her velvets, absorbed before her eyes, till nothing remained to look upon but eight hampers. Our retrospect has already been too long, and we therefore must not dwell upon the delightful feeling with which the labour thus accomplished inspired its projector; suffice it to say, that Madame Tornorino, as nearly as she could, followed her mamma's example; that not a candle-box or crockery-crate was left unoccupied; and that few ladies ever quitted their native shores leaving less of what they loved behind, than did the mother and daughter of our history.

But all these treasures, or at least by far the greater and more precious part of them, were still reposing in their wicker tabernacles awaiting the necessity, now apparently so delightfully near, of being called forth again into action. It is scarcely exaggeration to say, that every fibre of their animated owner's frame felt a quiver of delight as she remembered what she had to show, and listened to the invitation to display it. But some delay was, however, inevitable. The effect of dragging forth her splendid draperies from the unseemly recesses of a wine hamper, was in a moment so gray

to the soul of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that, despite her eagerness, she ventured to refer her friend to the morrow for the gratification of a curiosity which it was very evident she would have found gratifying to-day, but when the stately Mrs. Allen Barnaby said with dignity, "My travelling trunks, my dear madam, are not all as yet been conveyed to my apartment," Mrs. Beauchamp became aware that it was no good to press the matter further, and courtesied herself off with an assurance that she would not forget to write the notes she had mentioned, and had about whatever that "lots of invitations would follow."

CHAPTER XIV.

Among my readers who have studied the character of Mrs. Barnaby with the attention it deserves, will easily believe she lost no time in setting about the business that must of itself precede her keeping her promise to Mrs. Beauchamp. In the absence of the major at this moment, and indeed that of his law too, was exceedingly provoking. They were both tall men, and she knew pretty well that it was not very likely of them would venture to refuse their assistance to her, had she been within reach of her commands. But of their whereabouts she knew nothing. And the job, as she told herself, must be set instantly. But Mrs. Allen Barnaby had great ability, which she showed itself to greater advantage than when she was called upon by the exigencies of the moment, to put herself, and every-else that she could influence, into a bustle. For one moment, no more, she paused to think how she should begin, and then she rang the bell sharply. Cleopatra answered it instantly, with the negro grin that seems ever to promise (poor wretches!) willing obedience. Mrs. Allen Barnaby stood ready with a little silver commonly called in those regions a fip, in her hand. "I have got a rather tough job to get through, my girl," said she, "and if you will set to and help me, I'll give you this." "This is, perhaps, of all sources of earthly joy, what a slave would prize best, and though a negro eye does not sparkle, those of Cleopatra gleamed forth a look of great delight, and extending her white palm, so different in hue from the rest of her skin,

"I am ready, missis, I've ready to do ebery ting." "It is more than I want, Cleopatra," said the dignified lady, with a condescending smile. "All I want is, that you should set out at our house at the back of the yard, you know, behind the outhouse, where all our luggage was put, that came from the West Indies, and get some of the other blacks to help you."

bring up into this room all the hampers you can find there. Do you understand?"

"Is all the nigger blacks to share dis, share and share dis, ma'am?" demanded the disappointed Cleopatra, holding out its fist to the lady.

"No, Cleopatra, no, that is for yourself alone. Put it in your pocket, and say nothing about it to anybody. When all the hampers are brought into this room, and all the chest boxes, and the great earthenware crate into the room of my daughter, Madame Tornorino, I will give a levy to be divided among the people that help you."

"If I do it all my own self, will missis gib me the levy?" asked Cleopatra, very coaxingly.

"I will give the levy whenever the things are all brought up," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby; "but I tell you, Cleopatra, that you can't do it by yourself; it is perfectly impossible."

Cleopatra answered nothing, but grinned and departed. During her absence, Mrs. Allen Barnaby arranged her room in the best manner she could devise for the reception of the ponderous baggage she expected; and this done, she sought and found her daughter, and the two Miss Perkinses, whom she informed of what was going on, and then requested that they would all come into her room to assist her.

"I'll be hanged if I do, though," replied Madame Tornorino; "and while I'm slaving for you, mamma, I wonder who's to touch my own things? I was just talking to Matilda about them when you came in, wasn't I, Matilda?" she added, addressing her friend with a wink, which demanded an affirmative. "I'll tell you what we'll do, mamma, and that will be all fair and no 'tyranny, which nobody you know can abide in this free country—which is now that I have just learned from Mrs. Grimes—I'll tell you what we'll do; you shall take Matilda, and I'll take Louisa, because I like her best for this sort of thing, and then we can both set to work fit and above board."

The two sisters eagerly proclaimed themselves perfectly ready to perform everything that was required of them, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby finding she could do no better, submitted to the arrangement. Whereupon the party, who were, during the discussion, assembled in the apartment of Madame Tornorino, divided—two ladies remaining where they were, while the other two proceeded across a wide corridor to the domain of Mrs. Allen Barnaby. But just as Miss Matilda and her respected friend reached the top of the stairs, which they passed in their way to its entrance, they were greeted by the sight of a huge hamper that seemed making its own way up the staircase. The figure of Cleopatra was, in fact, totally hid by the wide burden she had deposited on her head, but the next moment made it visible as, without looking to the right or to the left, the steadily balanced black machine passed on, with

little attention to what it met as a steam-engine.

ladies followed; Miss Matilda wondering, for she knew not of the hamper scheme, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby delighted. Ever since her arrival she had endured a sort of undefined anxiety about the time and manner of her reunion with the treasures which that hamper and its fellows contained. She knew, indeed, or at any rate she believed, that those treasures were safe, nay, that they were, as it might be said, near her; but there was something so unusual, so *impracticable* in the nature of their envelopments, that difficulty, uncertainty, and opposition seemed to overhang her tangible possession of them.

Nothing, in fact, short of the absolute necessity produced by Mrs. Beauchamp's request could have given her courage to issue the command she had pronounced to Cleopatra, and joyful was she—oh! very joyful, when she perceived one division of her unwieldy armament thus far advanced on its march towards her own quarters. What then were her emotions on entering her room to see all her eight hampers spreading themselves far and wide before her eyes, and the well-pleased Cleopatra grinning in the midst of them. She seized upon Matilda's arm, and grasped it fondly.

"Isn't that a comfort, Matilda?" she exclaimed. "I have hardly ever said a word about it, even to the major, but I declare to you, upon my honour and life, Matilda, that I always felt as if I never should get them all together again."

Miss Matilda stared with the most unaffected astonishment at the display which so enchanted her friend.

"Hampers!" she exclaimed, in an accent which expressed, better than any words could have done, how perfectly unintelligible their appearance was to her.

"Yes, my dear, hampers," returned their happy owner, laughing heartily. "Do you think I have brought over a stock of wine in them, Matilda?" Then turning to the negress, while she honourably drew forth the promised *levy* (value elevenpence), she said, "And where are the people who have helped you to bring all these up, Cleopatra?"

"De people is me own self, missis," replied the girl, holding out her hand for the well-deserved gratuity.

"Well, to be sure, you *are* a strong girl! I didn't quite intend to be giving three fips at a time to any nigger; but there, you shall have it as you have done the job so quickly; but remember, all Madame Tornorino's things are to be brought up too. However, I can tell you for your comfort that there is not one half so many as mine. I'm sure I don't know how it is, Matilda. I have always dressed Patty uncommonly elegant, as you well know, and I should not say I had ever begrudged her anything—should you? And yet, somehow or other, it always happens that I get quantities more things for myself. That does look a monstrous sight of dresses, doesn't it, Matilda?"

"Dresses!" exclaimed the still mystified Matilda. "Do all

those wine hampers contain dresses, Mrs. O—Mrs. Allen Barnaby?"

"You shall see, my dear," was the reply. "Just hand me out that razor of the major's, will you, Matilda? Now, then, what shall we begin with? Let me see if I can remember anything about it. My court dress is in the biggest of all. That's it, isn't it? Let us begin with that."

The major's razor was sharp and true, the stout whipcord mangled before it, again, again, and again, till the top was fairly disengaged on all sides, and fell creaking to the ground. Mrs. Allen Barnaby hastily snatched away the linen wrappers which still intervened between her and her court dress, and then stood gazing upon it as it lay richly heaped in all its splendour, with an intensity of pleasurable emotion to which the pencil could do better justice than the pen.

Alas! the poor Matilda! "How stood she the while?" All the finery she had in the world had crossed the ocean in one trunk, two handboxes, and a bag, and all the consolation which the unpacking, handling, and setting it in order, could convey to her spirit, had been already enjoyed! At that moment, perhaps, she did envy Mrs. Allen Barnaby, notwithstanding her large waist and her gray hairs; but a little reflection caused her to turn her eyes towards the looking-glass, whence the youthful contour of her figure greeted her so cheeringly, that her spirits revived, and she set about the business she was summoned to perform, almost without breathing a sigh, though she had to hand out from this and the seven following hampers, not less than thirty-two dresses, three cloaks, five shawls, nine scarfs, sixteen *fichus*, and twenty-eight embroidered collars! Nevertheless, the operation was certainly in some degree a painful one. Yet was it soothed by the delightful consciousness, that not one of all the things she saw and handled, but would look five thousand times better upon her than upon its owner!

And thus passed the hours, till the first dinner-bell gave notice that it was time to dress. Miss Matilda heard it with joy and gladness, Mrs. Allen Barnaby with dismay. She had not found lodging-room, notwithstanding Mrs. Carmichael's very handsome assignment of drawers, for one half of her belongings, and now actually wrung her hands, almost in despair, as she exclaimed—

"Oh! Matilda, Matilda! What am I to do with my three velvets?"

"We must think of that another time, my dear Mrs. O—Mrs. Barnaby," replied the young lady, giving notice that it was her decided intention to depart, by walking straight towards the door, and instantly opening it. "I have got something very particular to do to the cap I am going to wear at dinner to-day," she said, "and I can't stay a minute longer."

Before she could be answered she was gone, and the
Mrs. Allen Barnaby looked around her with the mixed

enjoyment and distress, so frequently produced by the *embarras des richesses*. At this moment her husband entered, for the purpose of preparing himself for dinner, and great was his astonishment at the spectacle that greeted him. The eight huge hampers, though emptied of their contents, occupied not the less space on that account, but so choked up the room with their bulk, that it seemed nearly impossible to get across it.

"What on earth are you about, wife?" he exclaimed, and not, perhaps, in the gentlest of accents. "What is the good of dragging out all this trumpery if we are to start away up the Mississippi in a week or so? Is it for the pleasure of looking at it all? Upon my soul, I did not think you were such a fool."

Strong in conscious innocence, my admirable heroine lost not her temper, but explained to him, as he performed his ablutions, after having scrambled over the obstacles which impeded his approach to the washing-stand, how absolutely necessary it was that she should comply with the marked request of Mrs. Beauchamp, and show that she *had* some dresses fit for a Christian to wear.

"It is quite plain to me, Donny," she continued, soothingly handing him his rose-coloured satin cravat, "perfectly plain and clear that Mrs. Beauchamp, who is evidently a remarkably sensible woman, does not choose to commit herself by introducing strangers of whom she knows no more than the child unborn, to all the best families of New Orleans. Now she knows, as well as I do, that dress speaks for itself—and though she did it in a very genteel, ladylike way, I don't greatly doubt, I promise you, that if I had made any shuffling excuses, about not liking to unpack my things, we should presently have found her as shy as you please about introducing us. But everything will go right now, depend upon it. Just ask yourself if anybody in their senses could look upon such dresses as these, and feel any doubt of the high respectability of the person to whom they belong? Just ask yourself, major?"

"To be sure, there is something in that," replied the reasonable husband. "But how in the world, my dear, did you contrive to collect such an immense quantity of rich, expensive-looking dresses?—are they all paid for, my Barnaby?"

"My dear major, I always consider *that* to be a question between myself and my conscience, with which nobody, not even you, my dear, has any right to meddle. I know my own heart, Donny, and when I feel that it is for the advantage of my husband and child to do a thing, I do it, without stopping to consider what anybody else may think of it. If everybody did the same, Major Allen Barnaby, you may depend upon it the world would be a deal better than it is. But I am sorry to say that *duty* is often and often put out of sight, and that, too, by people who fancy they are mighty good. I thank heaven that I know what's right better than that comes to—and it is not a little that will stop me, nor ever did, when I feel that I am doing my duty to my family."

"You are a charming woman, my dear," returned the major,

with a very gallant air, "and as I have often told you before, we certainly made on purpose for me. But hark!—there goes the gong of a dinner-bell—come along, my dear! I suppose I met sit by Mrs. Beauchamp again to-day, as I have begun to do; though I have no particular object in it now."

"Don't say so, my dear Donny," replied his lady, looking at him rather reproachfully. "Remember; that as a husband and a father, you have your duties to perform, as well as myself. You have still a great deal to do, my dear. As yet you have only made her understand that I am a woman of genius, and a writer greatly approved in my own country; and you should go on now to dwell upon our position in fashionable society, and among people of rank."

"Why, my dear," replied the major, giving a last brush to his whiskers, "they one and all of them hate people of rank—they say so every moment almost."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby drew on her black silk mittens, smiled, and nodded her head.

"Major," said she, while her eyes assumed an exceedingly cold expression, "major!—don't be affronted—but you don't see us into a stone wall as I do."

"Don't I, my dear? Why, how far do you see?"

"Just far enough to convince me that they just do not see us, and rank as much as ever I did, when I used to toady that hunch old cat, Lady Susan—and that's saying a good deal."

"Yes, so it is, my dear," replied her husband. "But if you say as much in your book, I don't think it will answer."

"No more do I, my dear," she rejoined; "but come along, Donny, come to dinner; don't be afraid, you may trust me."

CHAPTER XV.

THE dinner of this day passed very much as the others had done. Mrs. Carmichael wheezed, and eat, and hoped, the gentlemen and ladies found the canvas-backs and the hominy good, and she wheezed again. Major Allen Barnaby did his very best to confirm all Mrs. Beauchamp's favourable impressions respecting the excellent standing of himself and his family. His lady, eating, dispensing smiles around, the very picture of admiring observation, and twinkling intelligence. Miss Louisa Perkins unexpectedly found Anne Beauchamp seated next to her, and therefore felt herself considerably nearer being comfortable than at any moment since she first breathed the air of the United States; for she heard herself repeatedly spoken to, and that with the most engaging kindness and good nature. Miss Matilda believed herself to be less better than usual, having very successfully altered her

amber cap, and got her hair to curl and hang *beautifully*. Patty pinched her husband's elbow, and laughed loud with delight, when he turned suddenly round to see what was the matter. Mr. Egerton talked a good deal to Miss Beauchamp, and flattered himself that he had made her exceedingly angry. And the rest of the good company went on very much as usual.

But on the following morning several important circumstances occurred, tending greatly to change the position of our travellers, and to advance each and every of them in the direction they wished to pursue.

Before leaving the room where the boarders breakfasted, Mrs. Allen Barnaby made her way to the side of Mrs. Beauchamp, and lowering her voice to a confidential tone, said—

“Whenever you like to come to my room, my dear madam, I shall be ready to see you. I have now got a few of the dresses unpacked, about which I desired to consult you.”

This was enough to secure the immediate attendance of the lady whose good opinion she wished to propitiate, and who had, indeed, feelings stronger than mere curiosity to make her accept the invitation. Never, perhaps, had Mrs. Allen Barnaby displayed more acuteness than when she guessed that Mrs. Beauchamp was anxious to ascertain the style of her wardrobe, before she ventured upon introducing her and her family to any persons of Louisianian importance.

This was precisely the fact. Not that Mrs. Beauchamp entertained the slightest doubt of Mrs. Allen Barnaby's being a person of great talent; of that she felt sufficiently assured, by the manner in which she admired everything she saw; but as it appeared that the party had omitted to bring letters of introduction to New Orleans (which the major accounted for by saying that their original intention had been to sail to New York), she confessed to her husband that she knew no other safe and sure criterion, excepting dress, whereby she could sufficiently ascertain their standing, to justify her introducing them to her tip-top friends; and to confess the truth, the note which was to secure the strangers an invitation had yet to be written.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby found means to watch, with a good deal of tact, and without at all betraying her deep interest in the matter, the sort and degree of effect produced by the display of her rich suits upon her American friend, nor had she any reason to feel disappointed at the result of the experiment.

Mrs. Beauchamp, indeed, said little, much less than was usual with her on most occasions; but she looked, she touched, she meditated, and she reasoned. The two ladies moved gently about, from chair to chair, from the bed to the sofa, and from the sofa to the bed, without any of the bustling noisy discussion which such an examination generally produces between female friends. Indeed, very little was said by either of them: Mrs. Beauchamp understood good manners a great deal too well to give utterance to the in-

creased and still increasing esteem, to which the velvet, satin, and lace displayed before her, gave birth; while Miss Allen Barnaby felt too much alive to the importance of that esteem, to interfere with the mental process, which she clearly saw was going on, to augment it.

The first words, however, or nearly so, which were spoken while this examination lasted, were uttered by the owner of the article, which pleaded thus trumpet-mouthed, for her gentility. Mr. Allen Barnaby said at length, but in an accent very nearly of indifference—

"You must not forget, you know, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, that you promised to tell me whether the style of any of these dresses would be fit for the society to which you have so kindly offered to present me."

"No, indeed, my dear ma'am," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, "I am not going to do any such thing, I assure you; and I am happy to say that I don't see any one thing among all these handsome articles which you might not put on with the very greatest propriety when visiting any of the great families here. When you have been a little longer in the country, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby, you will find out, I am sure, for you are a great deal too smart and observing to miss seeing it, that this southern part of the Union enjoys a much higher class of society than those who have been ill-advised enough to make themselves free states. They grovel, as we all say, in the very outskirts of civilisation, and have just missed the only way to make a republic in any degree elegant and respectable; and the cause is plain to those who don't shut their eyes on purpose, because they won't see. For it's easy enough to guess, that no white free-born Americans, whether men, women, or children, will choose to make household drudges of themselves and work for wages. It follows in course then you see, that we must either scrub, and rub, and toil, and sweat for ourselves, like so many downright savages, or else that we must make use of the creatures that we have luckily got hold of—that are neither white nor free-born—and make them do what it is quite positively necessary that ladies and gentlemen must have done for them."

While these words were spoken, Mrs. Allen Barnaby stood with her hands clasped together, and her eyes fixed on the speaker, with the air of one who is listening to the most important information that one human being can bestow upon another.

"Every word you utter, my dear madam," she said, "convinces me that Providence has thrown me in your way, in order to prevent my putting forth to the world, with the authority of my name (which truth at this moment obliges me to confess is not inconsiderable) any of those false views on the subject of negro slavery, which, I blush to say, are too freely propagated in Europe. I see at once the full force of your argument, and you will do me a great favour if you will just sit down here for a moment while I make a memorandum of your observation. Never mind."

velvet dress, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp—it was made at Paris last year; but you know the great misfortune of velvets is, that they are eternal!”

“My!” exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp, following with her eyes the splendid robe with its gold stomacher, as it was thrown carelessly aside in order to give her a chair. “I expect it looks as if it was made yesterday. I do wish, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that if we go all together to-night to Judge Johnson’s, you would just wear that gown—it is first-rate elegant, and I expect there’s nobody so stupid as not to see that—and don’t you mind its being hot weather, Mrs. Allen Barnaby—we can learn you to fix the things under, so that you will hardly feel the difference.”

“Most assuredly I will wear that dress, if you approve of it, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp,” was the obliging reply, but spoken with the sort of dignified indifference which a queen might have shown upon a similar occasion.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby now took her new note-book and pencil out of her table-drawer, and sitting down before it, said in a tone which formed a charming contrast to that in which she had spoken of her dress—

“May I ask you, my dearest madam, to repeat to me a few words of what you were saying just now? This will amply suffice to recall the general bearing of your admirable and unanswerable argument.”

“I expect that what I was saying was about the ridiculous impossibility of republican gentlemen and ladies doing for themselves without the assistance of niggers. And what I think is the best argument of all, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, is just this—I want the abolitionists to be pleased to tell us which they calculate is the greatest sin; the letting black heathen nigger creturs what grows wild in their own woods, for all the world like so many painters and pole-cats, I want to know, I say, whether it’s wickeder to let them do the work of the Union, or to put it upon the gentlemen and ladies of the republic to do it for themselves, and them the very people that the immortal Washington fought for? The very people who got done finished the glorious 4th of July work, and that now stands in the face of all Europeyans as the pattern people of the world. Which of the two is it that ought to do the dirty work? Is it the heroes of the Stars and the Stripes, or is it the nigger slaves what belongs to them?”

Mrs. Beauchamp said all this slowly and deliberately; and the more so, as she observed that her friend was earnestly engaged the while in writing.

As soon as the sentence had reached its conclusion, Mrs. Allen Barnaby raised her eyes, fixed them solemnly on the face of her eloquent and animated companion, and having gazed at her for a moment, exclaimed—

“I never did; no, never in my whole life, hear anything put so clear and convincing as that. Why, anybody that doesn’t

see the truth of it, must be as stupid as the dirt under their feet!"

"No, no; it is not so much stupidity, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby," replied the patriotic lady, "as downright good-for-nothing wickedness—they do all see it—they *MUST* see it—they *MUST* know that a white man, a white American republican, is better than a nasty, filthy, black nigger slave—but that's the shocking part of the business, my dear lady. They see it, and yet they won't say so, on account of their poisonous party spirit. And it's just that, which threatens the safety of the finest part of the Union, and the only part sufficiently advanced in the elegance of civilisation to get themselves looked up to by Europeans."

This was said with so much vehemence, so much bitterness, and such heightened colour, that the acute Mrs. Allen Barnaby was once how very near, and how very important a subject they were discussing, and she quietly determined to act accordingly. She raised her hand to her forehead, which she pressed forcibly, as if to still its painful throbbings. She sighed, then sat motionless while, then sighed again, and at length, in a voice as deep and solemn as that of Mrs. Siddons herself, she said—

"I feel that this important, this *awfully* important subject excites my mind too strongly. It will require many solitary hours of deep thoughtfulness to represent it to the world in the light in which it ought to be viewed. I see all—all *NOW*—as clearly as the sun at noon-day, and it shall not be my fault if Europe does not see it too."

"Then you see it as I do, my excellent, clear-headed Mrs. Allen Barnaby? You range yourself on the side of the personal slave-holders?" exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp.

"I do, indeed," replied the authoress, in a tone of the most dignified decision.

"Then if I don't prove myself worthy of such a friend, may I never be waited upon by a slave again," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, suddenly rising. "And now, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, I must leave you, for I have many things to do. I hope we shall enjoy our party to-night—I am told it is to be a very gay one."

"You are aware, my dear madam," said our traveller, remembering her husband's hint, "that we English ladies never pay visits unaccompanied by our husbands."

"And it does you honour, ma'am, great honour. The ladies of the Union are first-rate particular in that line themselves. In course, my friends will expect the company of the major, and not only that, I can tell you. The whole party of a lady of your views will be welcome, go where you will, in this part of the country, and that if you made up altogether half-a-score, instead of half-a-dozen."

"You are exceedingly kind and polite," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, feeling to her very fingers' ends the strength of her present position, and only hesitating in her acceptance of this whol-

the hospitality, from thinking it possible that she might turn the glowing sentiment of gratitude she had excited, more exclusively to her own profit—"exceedingly obliging, indeed. But I do not think there is any necessity to trouble you with such a very large party. Our good friends, the Perkinses, are certainly the best creatures in the world, and I am only too happy to have them with me—in attendance upon me, I might in fact say—but there is no occasion whatever to ask for their being invited on the present occasion. It may be a check, perhaps, on future hospitality."

"You are very considerate and thoughtful, my dear ma'am," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, "and perhaps it may be as well—"

At this moment Madame Tornorino entered her apartment, and asking in her usual unembarrassed manner what they were talking about, was immediately made acquainted with the point they were discussing.

"How can you be so abominably ill-natured, mamma?" said the bride with some vehemence, "when you know Matilda is my particular friend? Pray ma'am, get her invited if you can, for I shall have no fun if she doesn't go. As to Louisa, indeed, she may just as well stay at home, for she is too dull for anything."

Mrs. Beauchamp declared Madame Tornorino was the liveliest young lady she had ever seen, but added that she could not stay another minute to listen to her, as she had *forgotten* to explain properly to her friend Mrs. Judge Johnson about who she was to have the happiness of seeing, and she must write to her again directly. And she did write to her concerning the large party of additional guests whom she requested her to invite, but not *again* inasmuch as she had never before written a word upon the subject, having waited, as before stated, for some satisfactory proof of the Allen Barnaby race being worthy of the promised honour. But on this point assurance had indeed become doubly sure.

"Nobody who knew anything of the higher classes in any country could doubt for a moment (as she told Mrs. Judge Johnson) that such dresses must belong to a *real* lady, but what," she added, "was *that* compared to the high-minded feelings, and the extraordinary abilities she had shown upon the subject so near to all their hearts?"

In short, she explained her motives so clearly, and expressed them so well, that as quickly as the black messenger could go and return, Mrs. Beauchamp was in possession of a note that authorised her to bring with her the five friends she had named.

"The *five* friends?" said Annie, when her mother communicated the note to her.

"Yes; all you know, except that poor melancholy-looking one, *that* does not seem as if she could take pleasure in anything."

"The eldest of the two Miss Perkinses you mean?" said Annie.

"Yes, my dear."

"Well, then, mamma, I shall stay at home with her," said the young lady, with all the pertinacity of a spoiled child.

"You stay at home, Annie? My daughter, you must be ost of your wits to say so. I should like to know what father would say to that?"

But the young lady persisted, and, as generally happens in such cases, the mamma gave way; Miss Louisa was taught to consider herself invited, and Mrs. Beauchamp made up her mind to smuggle her in among the rest, or if challenged as to their numbers, to declare that it was a blunder of her foolish Annie's.

It so chanced that this little debate between Mrs. Beauchamp and her daughter took place in the great saloon, while some few of the boarders were waiting there in expectation of the dinner-bell, and among them was Mr. Frederic Egerton. This young man had been vacillating a little respecting his immediate departure from New Orleans. It had occurred to him that he had not yet seen enough of the singular forest around it, with its rich Palmetto shrubs, and its heavy pendent moss; and he had pretty well made up his mind to stay another week.

He was one of those who had been honoured by a verbal invitation from the honourable Judge Johnson himself, for the party of the evening; but he had prudently given an uncertain answer, and in truth had decided upon avoiding so warm a ceremony. But his curiosity was now piqued to know why that little obstinate, thorough-bred American girl, insisted so rudely and so vehemently, upon being accompanied by that deplorable-looking Miss Perkins.

"She has got some horribly vulgar American joke in her head, I am quite sure of it," he muttered to himself. "And if I am broiled for it, I will certainly go, in order to find out what it is. How I do detest American jokes!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE drawing-rooms of Mrs. Judge Johnson, like many others in New Orleans, were large, lofty, and handsome; and, on the present occasion, very tolerably lighted, so that Mrs. Allen Barnaby and her party felt, on entering them, all the delight of reviving hope for the future. The rooms were already very nearly full, Colonel and Mrs. Beauchamp being always very late, owing to the gentleman's evening nap, which nothing was ever permitted to interfere with. But this circumstance only added to the gratification of our party, proving to them at once, by one heart-cheering *coup-d'œil*, that they were, as Mrs. Allen Barnaby emphatically expressed it, "Once more in the land of the living."

"Isn't it a comfort, Patty," said she, making a sudden step forward, and clutching her daughter's arm, "isn't it a comfort to see

so many full-dressed people again? I swear that I dreamt half-a-dozen times at the very least, when I was aboard ship, that the devil, or something like him, came and told me I should never put my foot in a ball-room again. And you see that dreams do go by contraries. Isn't it delightful, Patty?"

"Lor, mamma, how you do pull me!" said Patty, in return, endeavouring to withdraw herself from the maternal grasp, in order not to be separated from her husband, who was drawing her forward. "Yes, yes, to be sure, it is very delightful—only let me go."

At this moment Mrs. Judge Johnson, a very thin lady of about five-and-thirty, came forward from the crowd that surrounded her, and to whom she was giving in the strictest confidence a few hints as to *who was coming*, with all the interesting particulars now attached to the names of Allen Barnaby.

The interest and curiosity thus excited, was of the most animating kind, and produced so evident a desire to behold the celebrated heroine of the tale, that Mrs. Allen Barnaby had the exquisite gratification of finding herself the object upon which every eye was fixed. Perhaps her heart had never beat so joyously since the moment of her first introduction to Lord Mucklebury! With the acuteness which made so remarkable a feature in her character, she saw at a single glance what was going on, and understood it, too, completely.

"Do you see, Donny?—do you see?" she whispered in the ear of her husband, on whose arm she was now stalking forward with indescribable dignity to receive the welcome of her hostess. "Don't they all look as if they were ready to worship me? I have not told you yet all that I have been hearing and saying about the niggers."

Mrs. Judge Johnson having now succeeded in getting within speaking distance of her illustrious guest, made a courtesy, at once becoming the dignity of a judge's lady and the cordial hospitality of a Louisianian patriot, upon receiving a lady about to write a book on the principles avowed by Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and which were already pretty generally known throughout the room.

"I can't be thankful enough, I'm sure, ma'am, to my obliging friend Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, for bringing me and the Judge acquainted with a European lady of your standing and great ability. There has been a great deal of ill-blood brewed, and evil seed sown between our two countries, by the vile abominable lies and slanders that some of your travelling authors have propagated against us; and to such a lady as you are, I expect this must be as hateful as it is to us. But if what we hear of you is true, ma'am, which we cannot doubt, seeing it comes from Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, of Big-Gang Bank, if all the good we hear of you is true, you shall find that we are not people to take up prejudices against all, for the faults and the crimes of some.

"You will find yourself as much honoured here, Mrs. Allen

Barnaby, as if you were a free-born citizen of our glorious soil. We have no prejudices against the English, notwithstanding all the ill they have done us. All we ask at their hands is a fair and honest account of the glories of our unrivalled government, and the splendour of our institutions, and this is just what we never get from them—for it is a common saying among us, that the bigness of their lies is in proportion to the littleness of their country. But by you, ma'am, we expect to be treated differently, and different, as you will find, will be the return. And this honourable gentleman is, I expect, the major, your husband. He is heartily welcome, ma'am, for your sake—and so are all the rest of the ladies and gentlemen, and would be if there was double the number. Just in time, too, here comes the honourable Judge Johnson, my husband. Judge, this is the lady from England, as we were talking of but now. You remember," and she whispered something in his ear. "And this is a major of England, her husband, and these are her sons and daughters, I believe, or her very particular friends; all come out to travel with her, and to help her, may be, in giving a fair and just account of us at last."

Mrs. Judge Johnson was one of those ladies who, when they begin a speech, never seem to know how to leave off again. It is probable she would not have ended here, had not the Judge begun to speak himself; and whenever this happened, she immediately ceased—an example which it would be well if many ladies, of many countries, followed.

The Judge, however, had certainly a particularly good right to the privilege thus accorded him, because it was very rarely that in his own house he spoke at all. He was a senator, and in the chamber of the legislature was celebrated for his eloquence; but elsewhere, he was, generally speaking, a very silent man. He was one of those who had, with the utmost consistency of purpose and unvarying steadiness of principle, persevered in advocating the righteousness of the slavery system against all the attacks made upon it by those whose notions of freedom, as a national characteristic, were founded on rather a broader basis than his own. It was he who, with the most constantly sustained and most arduous vehemence had, through session after session, brow-beat, abused, and ridiculed the bold men who had ventured to attack this darling idol of the slave states; and he was revered accordingly by those who worshipped it.

This honourable gentleman almost rivalled his lady, though with fewer words, in expressing the height, length, and breadth of the affection and esteem which he ever held ready to bestow on all persons willing to come forward in support of what he was wont to call "HIS PRINCIPLES."

Men of all lands, when they talk of their *principles*, generally look conscientious and sublime, and so did the honourable Judge Johnson. You might have thought, to look at him when he was haranguing on the immutable nature of right; of the heaven-born

holiness of justice ; of the sinful weakness of permitting vacillating laws, and untried innovations, to sap and undermine the venerable institutions of the republic, that it was a martyr who was preaching in support of a holy but painful doctrine, which none but the steadfastly pure and holy-minded had courage to defend. And, accordingly, he was universally characterised by every citizen who possessed a slave throughout the Union, "as one of the worthiest and most high-minded men that ever lived—as true as steel, and as honest as the day."

And those who hung all their hopes of continued prosperity upon the system he supported, might well speak thus of him—for if he was right there, he was wrong in nothing else, in nothing, at least, in which this *principle* was not so vitally mixed as to make part and parcel of the thing itself. He was himself a strict liver in all ways. But, if it chanced that any instances came before him of the licentious immorality which inevitably arises from the monstrous "*union in partition*" which this fearful system produces, his strict morality seemed to melt away, like wax before the sun, and till he was again heard to speak upon some theme where this did not interfere, the honourable Mr. Judge Johnson might be mistaken for the most licentious man alive.

Of all this, however, Major and Mrs. Allen Barnaby knew very little, and of course, cared considerably less. They were both all bows, amenity, and smiles. The lady moved her plumes, shook her perfumed locks, and declared that New Orleans seemed to her a perfect paradise.

"I had no idea of seeing such a room of elegant company as this. It almost perfectly equals anything in London. My own last party, to be sure, was more numerous, and as many of the ladies wore their court-dresses, because we were all at the drawing-room that morning—it was more——"

But, luckily, before she finished her sentence, a contracted brow or two among the group she was addressing, reminded her of the outbreak of her friend, Mrs. Beauchamp, when the court of Queen Victoria had been alluded to on a former occasion. Therefore, stopping suddenly short, she looked round her with a sort of renewed delight, and then exclaimed, with very captivating *naïveté*—

"But oh! Good gracious! What use is it to talk of London, or Paris, or any other place in the world! For where did any one ever see in the same number, so many beautiful, elegant-dressed women, or so many noble, dignified-looking men?"

"I am very glad to find you are struck with that, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby," said Mrs. Beauchamp, in an audible whisper, and throwing her handsome patriotic eyes over the group of tall republicans who, standing in a cluster behind the Judge, were gazing with very eager curiosity at the lady who, it was rumoured, was come all the way from the old country on purpose to do them justice, and to write about them and their nasty niggers in the proper style—"I am very glad you are struck with that," she

repeated with energy, "because in this part of the Union, we do rather pride ourselves upon the elegant style of our gentlemen. All the young ladies in the United States, you know, are counted pretty, some more, and some less, of course; but it is in vain to deny that it is only in the slave states that the gentlemen look first-rate. And the reason is so plain, if people would but give themselves the trouble to understand it! For it's only in the slave states, in course, that a citizen is a master as well as a man; and what right, I should like to know, have those Europeyans, who clamour against our negro slavery, to insist upon it, that American gentlemen shall be the only gentlemen in the world who can't say that much for themselves?"

A very audible murmur of applause ran round the circle which had now surrounded the strangers at this sally; and "devilish smart woman that!" was heard from various quarters.

Mr. Egerton, who had been in the room some time before the arrival of Mrs. Beauchamp's party, had by this time made his way up to it; an effort which he had probably been disposed to make, because the individuals composing it were the only ones in the room, save the honourable Judge Johnson himself, whom he knew by name, or with whom he had ever exchanged a syllable.

Mrs. Beauchamp, in her eagerness to perform properly all the duties of a chaperon to Mrs. Allen Barnaby, had dropped the arm of her daughter on entering the room, saying—

"You know everybody in the room, Annie, so you won't want me; but let who will come to you, be sure to keep civil with the English people."

Finding herself thus alone, Miss Beauchamp looked round her, before she took another step in advance; not so much, however, to see with whom she should join herself, as how most securely to avoid the proximity and conversation of Madame Tornorino, for whom she had conceived an aversion even greater than the fact of her being English could account for.

Having ascertained in what direction she and her loving husband had turned, she next looked about her for the other individuals of the party for whom her mother had requested her civility, and perceiving that the favoured Matilda had received permission to place the tips of her fingers on the gallant arm of Patty's Don, she looked about her, and for some time in vain, for the melancholy Louisa, and at last found her considerably in rear of the party—of course, utterly alone, and with an air as utterly desolate.

Annie instantly stepped back and joined her, offering her delicate arm, smiling exceedingly like an angel of light, and beginning to talk to her about the room and the people, as if they had been intimately acquainted for months. The sadness of the melancholy Louisa gave way before all this unlooked-for kindness, and being really as good-natured a woman as ever lived, she soon got talking and laughing with her young companion in a much gayer style than was quite usual with her; for even before she had been—

led into leaving her country, the constant anxiety in which she had respecting her sister's unpromising project of getting a husband, had rendered the life of Miss Louisa far from a happy one.

On perceiving the pleasant effect her attentions produced on the person whose quiet sadness had so moved her young heart to compassion, Annie redoubled her efforts to be amusing; and at the moment Mr. Egerton reached the place where she and Miss Louisa were standing, a little apart from the crowd that surrounded the great lion of the evening, Annie had made her companion laugh heartily, and was looking the very picture of gaiety and good-humour herself.

Mr. Egerton before he spoke to them, gazed at her for a moment in astonishment, and it might be, perhaps, a little in admiration. Miss Beauchamp was not on this occasion dressed in her robe of brown-holland; but as far as form went, was hardly less simply clad; and as the material was white muslin, without any mixture of colour or decoration of any kind, her appearance was still as remarkable for its quiet neatness as before. One ornament, however, she had, which was the full-blown flower of a snow-white Japonica, which she had fastened gracefully enough on one side of her head.

Having indulged, unseen, in looking at her for a minute or two, Mr. Egerton stepped forward and made himself visible, bowing civilly to the elder lady, and expressing his hope that he saw the younger well.

"Oh, dear! what a pity that Matilda is not here!" exclaimed the kind Louisa in her heart. "This is the very gentleman she was so anxious to be introduced to—and now he seems quite inclined to get acquainted!"

Her sister, however, was too far off to be summoned by any beck or winks that she could set in action, and all she could do was to return his civility in the most obliging manner, which she did by courtseying to him three times successively.

Miss Beauchamp, meanwhile, from the unexpected suddenness of Mr. Egerton's address, or from some other cause, perhaps her extreme dislike of him, coloured violently, but soon recovered both from the laughter he had interrupted, and the slight agitation he had produced. And then her manner became again as cold, as distant, and as disdainful as it had ever been when conversing with him. It is not very easy for a gentleman to keep up a conversation under such circumstances, especially when so large a portion of contempt and dislike mixes with his own feelings; but, with a sort of pertinacious obstinacy, Mr. Egerton was determined that he would talk to Miss Beauchamp. It might be that he hoped to plague her, or it might be that he hoped to amuse himself with her ransatlantic idiom; but let the reason be what it might, he was very steadfast in his purpose, and on seeing the young people preparing to dance, actually proposed himself to her as a partner.

Annie looked at him with considerable surprise, and certainly

her first impulse was to decline the offered honour; but she was very fond of dancing, and if she refused him she could not dance with another, without a degree of rudeness which nothing but a fresh-outbreak on his part in praise of his own country could have given her a courage for. She therefore, after a little delay that was just long enough to be uncourteous, bowed her consent, and he presented his arm. She looked at him as American young ladies always do look on such occasions (before they have visited Europe), and walked on beside him in silence, but without accepting it. And because Mr. Egerton passed judgment upon her with a spice of European injustice—for totally ignorant of the law which forbids young ladies to walk "lock and lock" with young gentlemen, he conceived her rejection of this ordinary piece of civility to be only an additional proof of her determination to be rude to him.

They had not, however, proceeded three steps in silence, before Annie, inexpressibly provoked at herself for her thoughtlessness, which really surprised as much as it vexed her, turned suddenly back again to poor Louisa, and kindly taking her hand, which she drew under her arm, she said—

"My dear Miss Perkins! I don't know what I was thinking of to leave you in this way. I expect you must think me the very rudest person you ever saw. Let me take you to your party before I begin dancing. Shall we look for your sister, or for Mrs. Allen Barnaby?"

"Thank you, my dear young lady! You are very—very kind to me—always," replied the really grateful Louisa. "If you can find out Mrs. Allen Barnaby for me, I shall be very glad, because, do you know, I should like to ask her if she thinks it would be possible to get a partner for my sister Matilda."

"Will it please you, Miss Perkins, if she gets a partner?" said Annie.

"Please me, my dear Miss Beauchamp? Oh, dear! oh, dear! I should be so delighted—I really can't tell you how delighted I should be."

"Then just stay here one moment, will you, with your countryman, Mr. Egerton? and I will see if I can manage it without troubling Mrs. Allen Barnaby."

And so saying, she glided away, leaving the not-too-well-matched compatriots side by side.

"You seem to have become already extremely intimate with that young American lady, Miss Perkins," said the gentleman. "Do you find her very agreeable?"

"I find her, sir, the very sweetest, kindest young creature I ever met with in my whole life," replied the grateful Louisa, with a degree of emotion that communicated itself to her voice. "I really do think that if I saw much of her I should grow to love her a great deal too well—she being an American foreigner, which would make it seem almost wrong and unnatural, if you were not."

"Why, really, Miss Perkins, if you feel thus—"

should be apt to think that you might carry your partiality rather farther than was reasonable, for you can have seen but a very little of her."

"And that is quite true, sir, certainly—but very great sweetness, and very great kindness, will go to one's heart, I believe, without taking a great deal of time for it."

The handsome, gallant, gay young Egerton looked in the pale face of the still dismal-looking old maid, with a considerable approach towards good fellowship.

"Perhaps, Miss Perkins, you patronise pretty young ladies," said he, smiling. "And I won't deny that Miss Beauchamp is very pretty, though she is so thoroughly American."

"Pretty, sir? Is that all you can say? I do think she is the most perfect beauty that ever was looked at."

"Yes, yes," he replied, laughing, "she is quite sufficiently beautiful, and I see I was right in supposing that this is the reason you have taken such a fancy to her."

"Then, without wishing to be rude, sir," she replied, very earnestly, "instead of being right, I must tell you that you are quite wrong. I don't believe at all that I have any particular liking for beauty. There's my sister's particular friend, Miss Patty—Madame Tornorino, I mean—I have heard that she is considered quite a complete beauty, and I do assure you, sir, that since she has been fully grown up, I have sometimes taxed myself with being very ill-humoured and unamiable about it—for the handsomer she seemed to get, the more I seemed to dislike looking at her."

- Again Mr. Egerton laughed, but by no means impertinently; and though he did not think it discreet to tell the lady how very well he understood and how very much he sympathised with her, he did offer her his arm to conduct her to a seat, saying, that he would watch for the return of Miss Beauchamp. But before Miss Louisa could express her sense of his obligingness, or do anything more than wish that it was her sister Matilda instead of herself that he was so polite to, Annie returned bringing the glad tidings that she had got one of the best partners in the room for Miss Matilda.

"And now tell me," she added, "where I shall leave you?"

"Oh! just there, if you please, my dear—where this gentleman was going to get me a seat before you came back."

"But shall you not like better to be with your party?" said Annie. "Mrs. Allen Barnaby has got all the grandeur of New Orleans round her. Should not you like to get a place near here? I am sure I can manage it."

"No, thank you, my dear," replied Miss Louisa, rather hastily. "I would a great deal rather sit here by myself, if you please."

Again Mr. Egerton felt a strong movement of sympathy towards the old maid, and it seemed as if he thought not of his

autiful partner till he had conducted her to the seat she desired occupy. Then, however, he returned with no very lingering p to the spot where he had left Annie conversing with some of r acquaintance, whom he heard entreating her, as he came up, get them an introduction to the celebrated Mrs. Allen Barnaby.

By this time the gentlemen dancers were all leading their artners to their places, and Mr. Egerton perceived that the manner in which this ceremony was performed, was by the gentleman's taking the hand of the lady in the good old Sir Charles Brandon style, and so parading her to the place she was to occupy. They took their station at the side of the quadrille, which gave time for a little conversation before the figure of the dance called upon them to begin.

"Your antipathy towards the degenerated inhabitants of the old country, Miss Beauchamp, seems to have relaxed, in one instance at least. You are exceedingly kind and attentive to that poor unhappy-looking Miss Perkins."

"I don't think she is unhappy-looking at all," replied Annie, evasively. "Not, at least, when she has anything in the world to make her look cheerful. I never saw any one more easily pleased in my life."

"And you really appear to take pleasure in producing this metamorphosis from grave to gay," returned Mr. Egerton. "And I could understand this very well, if she were not an English-woman. But, as it is, I confess to you that I am somewhat puzzled to understand why you have so decidedly taken her into favour."

Annie looked at him for a moment as if doubtful how to answer, and then said, with a little air, as if she had at length made up her mind—

"I will tell you the reason, Mr. Egerton. Miss Perkins is the only person I have ever heard of (I will not say conversed with though it would sound better—but I have scarcely conversed with any), Miss Perkins is the only English person I ever heard of, and I did not think him or her self vastly superior to everybody else the world. She, poor thing, is exactly the contrary, for she every symptom of believing herself inferior to everybody, and is the reason why I think her the most interesting individual the English party at Mrs. Carmichael's."

"The English party at Mrs. Carmichael's," muttered Egerton to himself. And then he and his fair partner were upon to perform their part in the dance.

Meanwhile the happiness of Miss Matilda was almost greater than anything she had ever dared again to hope for at home. When endeavouring to obtain a partner for her, Miss Beauchamp had not scrupled to hint that she was, as it were, part and parcel of that celebrated Mrs. Allen Barnaby, who was come from New Orleans on purpose to write a book in praise of the ~~States~~ and in defence of the slave system. Not only ✓

enough to procure the gentleman to whom it was addressed as a partner in the first quadrille, but no less than three others solicited the honour of her hand, before the first set was over, for the subsequent dances.

Those who know anything of Miss Matilda Perkins, can be at no loss to imagine her feelings. Nor was her friend and patroness less happy. Senators, members of congress, lawyers, writers, and statesmen, all crowded round her, and seemed to vie with each other in demonstrations of esteem and admiration. The heart of my heroine whispered to her—

“This is what I was born for. This is my real vocation.”

Her well-pleased husband lingered near her long enough to see how admirably well she bore her honours, and then giving her, unseen by all, one very little wink of satisfaction, turned away, confessing to the honourable Judge Johnson, who, at that moment, made the inquiry, “that he had no objection whatever to a rubber.”

The fair Patty was, in short, the only one of the party who did not think this visit very delightful; but being absolutely obliged to give up her husband to her papa, who had become so attached to him as to resolve upon never playing a game of cards of any kind without having him near his person, she found very little fun even in dancing, because, of course, now, as she rather pettishly muttered to herself, “Nobody could dare to make love to her for fear the Don should snap his nose off.”

Before she left the room, however, she, too, came in for a share of the honours of the evening; for a certain Mrs. General Gregory, a lady very richly dressed, and having every appearance of being a person of great consequence, made acquaintance with her by admiring her gown. This led to other subjects; and as Patty was not disposed to dance much, Mrs. General Gregory had so advanced the acquaintance before they parted, as to promise to come and call upon her and her mamma at the boarding-house. This greatly revived the spirits of Patty; for the lady talked of her carriage, and her horses, and her servants, and occasionally of the general, her husband, so that our young bride again felt that she too was somebody. But, after all, it was Mrs. Allen Barnaby herself who was in truth the well-head and spring of all these honours. She was herself fully aware of this, and enjoyed the glorious prospect opening before her with all the native energy of her character.

The last words she uttered to her husband before wishing him finally “good night,” will show the acuteness with which she read the causes that had produced such agreeable effects.

“I say, Donny—do you think I shall find a word or two to say in praise of slavery? Won't I, my dear? That's all.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE party at Judge Johnson's furnished a fund of conversation for the whole of Mrs. Carmichael's large domestic circle on the morrow; and had not the heart of Mrs. Beauchamp been filled by higher considerations (for she had begun to feel a very strong conviction that she was likely to become the agent of a revolution in public opinion concerning the slave states of America, little less important than that achieved by the immortal Washington), she might have found considerable gratification to her national vanity in the cordial admiration expressed concerning everything and everybody there, by the English party whom she had introduced.

As it was, however, she was intent on higher thoughts, and did little more than smile and bow with contented urbanity, when Miss Matilda Perkins distinctly declared at breakfast, that, much as she had always enjoyed the first-rate society of London—"Carnar-street and all, you know, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby," she had never seen a more perfectly elegant company than those assembled at Judge Johnson's, "and as for the gentlemen," she added, blushing slightly, and fixing her eyes upon the smoking roll she was engaged in buttering, "I must say that there is a thorough fashionableness and gentility about them that I don't think at all common to be met with in the old world."

Not even the decisive and emphatic "very gentlemanlike an indeed," of Major Allen Barnaby, could do more than produce a repetition of the smile and the bow from Mrs. Beauchamp; although the colonel, her husband, was moved thereby to open his eyes more fully than he had yet done that morning, and to reply, "I am glad to find, sir, that you are so thoroughly brought to that conviction at once, because it will prevent any acting of prejudice upon your mind as you go on progressing in your acquaintance with the country. I expect, sir, it was the luckiest thing you ever did, coming to this part of the Union in the first instance, for in no other direction, almost, could you have hoped to have fallen so completely with the right sort. You may depend upon it, Major Allen Barnaby, that the great proprietors in the slave-holding states of the Union, are the most perfect set of gentlemen upon God's earth."

But Mrs. Carmichael's breakfast-table was large enough to admit of more conversations than one being carried on at the same time, and this slow, solemn and deliberate speech of the colonel did not at all interfere with what was passing at a little distance from him. For some reason or other, perhaps from remembering the success of Miss Beauchamp's efforts the evening before, to make the melancholy Miss Perkins look gay, Mr. Egerton, who had chanced to overtake the good spinster as she was descending the stairs, not only addressed her cheerfully as rather an

instance, but actually offered his arm to conduct her across all, and in this way they entered the breakfast-room together. Beauchamp family had already taken their places, and Miss M., strengthened in spirit by the civility of her young country-actually took courage, as she slipped her arm away from his, proach, *avec intention*, towards a vacant chair next below that her friend Annie occupied, and was rewarded for the geous exploit by an extended hand, and a smile of very kind me. As a matter of course, Mr. Egerton followed the steps e lady he had escorted, and there being fortunately a second to be had, below that of Miss Louisa, he had the satisfaction ing able to place himself in close juxta-position to her, and it became evident not only to her observant sister, but to every else who happened to be looking that way, that the acquaintance en them was ripening into very considerable intimacy, for he l to her a great deal; and because she talked to her neighbour e other side, he began to talk to her too, notwithstanding his ion to everything so completely American. But he felt, or eginning to feel, that there would be something quite ridicu- in his fighting the battles of his country by being rude to a g girl, however "thoroughly American" she might be, and once awakened to the absurdity of such a line of conduct, he great care to avoid it.

Miss Matilda, meanwhile, having gazed for some moments on ery new and puzzling spectacle of her sister in the act of being talked to, and gaily listening, at length hit upon a solution, easily and rationally accounted for the unusual degree of tion she appeared to be receiving. Miss Matilda remembered uncommonly well she herself had looked in her pale pink silk rening before, and what unmistakable proof of this she had ed in the marked attentions of no less than six American men who had asked her to dance.

"I understand it all perfectly," thought she. "This Mr. on is just like all other Englishmen—so vastly fond of what-hey think is coming into fashion. I know well enough what ome next; Louisa will have to introduce me. But I can't say e much about it just now. That Mr. Franklin Brown is a dozen of him any day; and as for that odious American she just sees that it won't do to give herself airs to any of us. e all getting too much into fashion for that to answer. Yes; rstand it all."

Ms. Beauchamp had, with an air of decision that no boarding-etiquettes could oppose, seated herself next Mrs. Allen y, and the acquaintance between these two distinguished was advancing so rapidly towards the familiarity of friend- at they conversed wholly and solely with each other, and y in w hispers, and when the table broke up, they left the ether, arm in arm.

in whispers; but the happy bride condescended, from time to time, to interrupt this under colloquy by talking a little to the ladies named Hucks, and Grimes, concerning the last night's party, to which they had *not* been invited, and which, therefore, offered a theme particularly fertile, and to Patty, at least, particularly gratifying.

"But I wish you could tell me, Mrs. Grimes," said she, "something about that nice person, Mrs. General Gregory, as they call her. She was most uncommon civil to me, and is coming to call upon me this very day; and I should like monstrously to know something about her first, that I mayn't make any horrid blunders you know, in talking to her."

"Oh my!" returned Mrs. Grimes, "a fine young lady like you needn't in no way be afraid of talking to Mrs. General Gregory, for she would be quite up to understanding everything you could say to her, if you was ten times over English, she is first-rate standing in all ways."

"Is she rich?" asked Patty.

"Oh, goodness! yes, to be sure she is," was the reply. "They have not a chick nor child belonging to them, and they say ^{his} plantation is next largest to Judge Johnson's in Carolina. But then, you know, in course, that she is one of the ladies of the new light, only she makes a difference from what the eastern well-lighters say, on some points, on account you know of the negro population of Carolina."

This was by no means particularly intelligible to Madame Ternorino, and she immediately demanded, with her accustomed distinctness, when asking a question—

"Do you mean that she is a Methodist?"

"She is one of the evangelical saints, ma'am," said Mrs. Hucks, in a tone that showed she held the persons she alluded to in great respect.

"Well, I don't care a farthing for that," replied Patty, "as as she don't wear a sanctified, frightful little bonnet, and a prim mouse-coloured gown; and I am sure I saw no symptom of that last night, for she was beautifully dressed, and almost as fine as mamma."

"I don't know whether it is the same in the old country," resumed Mrs. Grimes, "but with us there is a great difference in the manner in which serious ladies fix themselves. Some dress just as you say about the bonnet and gown, and an't that far different from quakers, while there's others, like Mrs. General Gregory, who declare that they despise giving any attention at all to such contemptible distinctions, and say that there's no warrant for thinking that either bonnets or gowns make any difference in holiness."

"Oh! well, that's all right," returned Patty, "for we should never get on if she didn't approve fashionable dress, I can tell her."

"Well, now, begging your pardon, ma'am," said Mrs. Grimes "that's more of an American lady's feeling than I ever en 1 to

hear from an English woman; for in course you know that the English have no great fame in the Union in the article of dress. All through the world, I take it, the Americans and the French stand highest in that article."

"I don't know anything about that," replied Patty, "I only know that I wish I had only just one hundredth part of the fine clothes I've seen in London: but I shall talk to Mrs. General Gregory about it, for I intend to be great friends with her."

A favourable opportunity for putting this resolution in action was afforded exactly at that hour of the day when it is considered to be most genteel to make morning visits at New Orleans. Mrs. Major Allen Barnaby and Madame Tornorino, were both asked for by the well appointed black footman who attended the carriage of Mrs. General Gregory, and Cleopatra, who answered the inquiry, having first shown the exquisitely dressed and highly respected visitor into the saloon, ran up the stairs to give notice to those two favoured ladies of the honour that awaited them. Mrs. Allen Barnaby was at that moment in the act of writing a very important sentence in her note-book, under the dictation of Mrs. Beauchamp, but hastily threw down her pencil the moment she heard the summons, and prepared to obey it.

"Oh no! for Heaven's sake, do not go now," cried Mrs. Beauchamp fervently. "The passage you are writing at this moment, my dearest Mrs. Allen Barnaby, may produce more effect from an English pen than anything that has been written for years. For pity's sake, don't go!"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby felt her own consequence at this moment with a thrill of delight that amply atoned to her for the loss of all the doubtful glories of Curzon-street; but being vastly too acute not to perceive the source of this dear new-born consequence, she at once decided upon hazarding the loss, or at any rate the delay, of the well-sounding new acquaintance in the drawing-room, and assuming a look and tone of enthusiasm, which might really have made her fortune on any stage, she replied, "Dream not of it, my invaluable friend! I am not blind to the value of every acquaintance in such a country as this; but there is that within my heart at this moment, which renders all ordinary intercourse insipid; I felt before I left my own dear, but most ill-informed country, that I was predestined, if I may so express myself, to the task of doing justice to this magnificent continent. It was an enormous sacrifice that I demanded of my high-born husband, and his only, his lovely, his newly-wedded child; but the especial gift that I have received from Heaven, my dearest Mrs. Beauchamp, is that I rarely speak in vain. I explained my views, my motives, my hopes! and you see the result. You see me arrived here from my splendid English home, surrounded, not by my own dear family only, but by valued friends, whom their many excellent qualities, as well as their large fortunes and distinguished birth, rendered important to us. This I

have done for the United States of glorious America, and I leave you to judge, dearest lady, whether I am likely to turn from such an occupation as that in which we are now engaged, for the sake of any visitor in the world!"

It must not be supposed that Cleopatra waited to listen to this long harangue; on the contrary she did but deliver her message, and ran off again to repeat it to the "young madam," as she called Patty, who had already received her assistance in making herself rather finer than usual, in preparation for the great lady who was now arrived. Being thus ready, and alone (for her Don was as usual with his respected father-in-law), and in fact waiting for the summons, Madame Tornorino lost not a moment in obeying it, and was most exceedingly well pleased to find that her mamma did not appear; for she had often, of late, felt herself more thrown into the background than any married woman ought to be, by the overpowering claims of her female parent upon the eyes and ears of those around her, and she rejoiced to think that she should now have an opportunity of doing herself justice. Patty found her visitor seated in the middle of one of Mrs. Carmichael's large sofas, as if fearful that want of space might injure the flowing pea-green satin in which she was dressed; and when Madame Tornorino's ungloved and rather large hand was held out to welcome her, Mrs. General Gregory received it with the tips of her pale kid fingers, with a great deal of refinement and good taste. But Mrs. General Gregory had once passed eight weeks in France, and since that period the whole powers of her mind had been divided between two objects; the first of which was to be told by a few dearly beloved spiritual friends and advisers that she was fit to be a saint in heaven; and the next, to understand from all the world that she was sure to be taken for a French woman on earth. Having reseated herself after the salutation of Madame Tornorino, smoothed the folds of her robe, and arranged the lace of her cloak, Mrs. General Gregory opened the conversation by inquiring if Madame Tornorino had as yet attached herself to any particular congregation in the Union.

Few young women of Patty's age were better qualified to give an off-hand answer to a question not perfectly understood than herself: a faculty partly perhaps inherited from her mother, who had passed great part of her life in acquiring the art of appearing to know many things of which she was profoundly ignorant; but chiefly it was derived from an innate fund of original impudence, which gave her courage to dash at everything, confident alike in her own cleverness, which she felt made a good hit probable, and in her own audacity, which she also felt would render defeat indifferent. But in spite both of this moral and intellectual courage, the question of her new acquaintance startled her. In most of her previous adventures of this hit-and-miss kind with strangers, she had either caught a glimpse of their meaning, or fancied she had

done so; but now she had not the very slightest idea of what was meant, and was in the greatest danger of being forced to say so, when her good genius came to her aid, and shaking back her heavy black ringlets, in the most unembarrassed manner possible, she said, "Why really, ma'am, we have had no time yet for anything."

"I am delighted to hear it, my dear madam," replied the elegant visitor; "for in such a business as that to which I allude, nothing is so much to be avoided as rashness and over haste. To say the honest truth, indeed, I was a little in the hope that I might find it so, and nothing can more exactly convene to my wishes than that by thus early cultivating your acquaintance I may be the means of leading you in the right way."

What was poor Patty to say now? Clever creature! She only shook her ringlets again, and said, "I am sure you are very kind."

"I mean to be so, my dear young friend," replied the excellent Mrs. General Gregory, looking with great kindness upon the French embroidery of Patty's collar and cuffs, which was as quickly discerned to be such by her studious and learned eye, as the text of an Elzevir by the sharp ken of a scholar,—“I mean to be so. I am aware what the object of your admirable mother is in coming to this country, and I conceive it to be my bounden duty, knowing, as by grace and mercy I do, that I have made my own calling and election sure—I expect, my dear young lady, that it is neither more nor less, I say, than my commanded duty to do what I can towards helping others. And where—oh my!—where shall I find anybody so every manner worthy of being helped on towards the same election as a family to whom the whole Union is likely to be so deeply indebted as they are to be to yours?”

Patty began to see light. She had already heard an immense deal of talk (considering how short a time she had been in the country) upon ELECTIONS of all imaginable sorts and kinds. In a free country like America, everything is done by election, from choosing a president, to the appointing a pew-opener, and having listened with her usual sharpness to all this, she now became convinced that Mrs. General Gregory was going to propose her papa, or perhaps her own dear Don, for the stewardship of a ball, or a horse-race. Exceedingly delighted by this idea, Patty eagerly exclaimed—

"Dear me! how very kind and obliging—I don't think there is anything that we should all of us, from first to last, like so well."

"All? alas! my dear young lady, *all* is too extensive a word," replied Mrs. General Gregory; "when you have reached my age," she added with a gentle smile, and still gentler sigh, "you will leave off including the gents so freely in such work as we are talking about. If you knew as well as I do, the often hardness of heart, and the frequent blindness of eyes in the unfeminine part of the

best society, you would quite altogether, I expect, leave off saying a word about *all*."

The mystification of poor Patty now returned upon her with threefold darkness, and feeling that she was sinking deeper and deeper, and might very likely get into a scrape at last, her indigenuous wit sprung up in another direction, and caused her to exclaim with an air of goodhumoured *satiré*—

"I declare, my dear ma'am, I don't believe that I understand what you mean."

Mrs. General Gregory replied, first by looking earnestly and pitifully in her face for a few moments, and then by saying—

"Is it possible, my dear young lady, that by the ever-merciful but inscrutable interference of Providence, it falls to my happy lot to be the first that ever availed your dear precious young spirit of the necessity of calling together into families, the chosen of the Lord's people here on earth?"

"Why, really yes, ma'am," replied Patty, slightly yawning, "I can't say that in England I ever heard anything said about dividing ladies and gentlemen into families."

"Are they indeed so benighted, my dear young friend?" demanded Mrs. General Gregory, clasping her hands fervently together, and heaving a deep sigh; "then, indeed, it will be a privilege and very precious glory to have the task of awakening the soul of a young lady whose appearance is so every way interesting and approvable."

And here again, the general's lady, perhaps involuntarily, looked at the pretty new dress which Madame Tornorino had obtained at Howel and James's upon her papa's Curzon-street credit, a day or two before she left London.

"It will, indeed, be very precious to me, Madame Tornorino, my dear, to save so sweet a young brand from the burning!"

Now, here was sympathy, if ever it existed upon earth. Mrs. General Gregory looked at Patty's silk and embroidery, and preached to her about election, because she approved them; while Patty gazed upon Mrs. General Gregory's satin and lace, and patiently listened because she, too, approved.

From this point the conversation proceeded very amicably, the American lady judiciously mixing enough of worldly talk, to make her friendly overtures palatable to the as yet unregenerated neophyte, and the English one enduring the "monstrous bore" of her new friend's talk, for the sake of having a fine acquaintance that seemed to think her of almost as much consequence as her mamma.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It will not be irrelevant to this minute narrative of the Barnaby progress through the United States, to give a slight sketch of this new friend of Madame Tornorino, as it will help to explain the cause for which so sedate and elegant a personage as Mrs. General Gregory deemed it desirable to cultivate an intimacy with the young and blooming impudence of our Patty. She had, in truth, very strong reasons for it.

As no race is so sharp as that which goes neck and neck from the starting to the winning post, so no rivalry is so keen as that which, in like manner, exists between two persons nearly equal at all points. Between the ladies of the two great Carolinian planters, General Gregory and Colonel Beauchamp, there was at their country residence near neighbourhood and considerable intimacy: and there was also, both in country and in town, a pretty constant, but even civil struggle, for superiority, in consideration and (as the Transatlantics expressively term it) in *standing*. When, having both of them passed the age of forty, the two wealthy possessors of two of the finest plantations and two of the finest gangs of slaves in South Carolina, united themselves in holy wedlock with two of the most celebrated beauties of Baltimore, the young ladies were installed in their respective mansions with a degree of *first-rateness* that was very dangerously equal; for it instantly gave birth to a rivalry, which had lasted ever since.

The first atom of ground gained by either of these ladies in advance of the other, was on the part of Mrs. General Gregory, who unexpectedly announced, *un beau matin* to her friend and neighbour, that she had just completed an arrangement with one of the general's French correspondents (a wholesale coffee-dealer), for his despatching to her, twice every year, a box of millinery *direct from Paris*.

For a few months this blow was felt severely. It was vain that Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp appeared in the most elegant habiliments that Charlestown, New Orleans, Baltimore, or even New York itself could furnish; for it constantly happened upon her appearing before her neighbour with any article of dress which that lady had not before seen her wear, that an observation followed, accompanied with a multitude of obliging apologies, to the effect that she had that very morning received a letter direct, from her Paris milliner, to tell her that *that* particular article was completely out of fashion, and to warn her against any attempts on the part of the milliners of the United States, to pass such things off upon her as new.

It is necessary to know the sensitive delicacy of feeling on such points which prevails among ladies of high standing in America, in order to conceive the severity of the trial to which the temper of

Mrs. Beauchamp was exposed by this mode of proceeding. The first idea which occurred to her as suggesting the possibility of relief under it, was the opening a correspondence herself with a Parisian milliner; but unfortunately, Colonel Beauchamp's coffee was all consigned to Liverpool, and he had no French correspondent whatever—no, not even so much as at Havre—who might assist in favouring such a design. It was therefore after many vain attempts, finally abandoned, and the genius of Mrs. Beauchamp was called upon to devise some counter-current of superiority, which might enable her to shun the buffetings, and the bruises, which the high tide of her friend's good fortune had brought upon her.

Nor did the lady long meditate upon the subject in vain. She really was a clever woman, though on some particular subjects a little more vehement than reasonable; and upon everything relating to her "unequalled country," as she always called it, and everything connected with its constitution, laws, customs, and peculiarities, from an abhorrence of monarchy to an adoration of slavery inclusive, she not only was vehement both in feeling and expression, but would have considered it a very grievous sin to be otherwise.

People who, like Mrs. Beauchamp, think and speak, with more violence than profundity, are apt to attach value to their own powers of advocating whatever cause they espouse, and while the lady of Big-Gang Bank was meditating at what point her powers of intellect or of fortune might best enable her to outshine the lady of Rice-Lawn Paradise, a certain thought darted into her head, which, had she been desired to explain it she would probably have called "a patriotic inspiration."

She suddenly remembered how her father, of honoured and blessed memory, had ceased not, morning, noon, or night, as long as life had been lent him, to hold forth on the atrocious *dishonesty* and *injustice* (these specific accusations being the favourite stronghold of his clique) of all those who dared to impugn the holiness and the lawfulness of slavery. She remembered too, the love, the reverence, the gratitude, and the admiration with which he had ever been listened to by everybody, or at least by everybody whose love, reverence, gratitude, and admiration, she thought worth having; and from that moment of happy reminiscence, which occurred exactly three years after her marriage, down to the present hour, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp had acquired the reputation of being the most thorough-going, out-and-out patriot, and right-down, first-rate smart woman in the Union.

The result of this very brilliant success was speedily seen and painfully felt by Mrs. General Gregory: but she, too, as it seemed, had some kind, guardian spirit that watched over her destiny.

Some of

The light militia of the lower sky—

who in all lands watch over the changeful little destinies of the

ladies, led her from Rice-Lawn Paradise to the city of Baltimore, precisely at the moment when it was

Glowing like furnace—

from end to end, with the burning eloquence of a multitude of itinerant preachers, assembled there from all parts of the country, for the purpose of celebrating that very singular transatlantic solemnity, called "a Revival."

The same guardian sylph who had guided her in this propitious hour to Baltimore, guided her likewise into a fashionable chapel, where a fashionable preacher was assuring a multitude of fashionable ladies, that without the grace and comfort which he, and a few of his particular friends and brethren alone could give, they must all fall headlong into the bottomless pit.

While listening to this much-admired gentleman, Mrs. General Gregory was greatly struck by the beautiful display of feeling with which many first-rate ladies came forward at his call, and placed themselves on "the anxious benches" set apart for all those who wished to distinguish themselves by such a fearless demonstration of piety as this act demanded. In truth, Mrs. General Gregory was like many other persons, *very much* struck by this edifying spectacle.


She, too, wished to be distinguished, having, as we know, very particular reasons for it; and here (most providentially displayed to her) was a mode by which this earnest wish might be at once obtained. During the few moments of hesitation which followed the conception of this happy idea, she overheard the following remarks from some of the most elegantly-dressed ladies in the chapel, who fortunately happened to be placed immediately before her.

"My!" exclaimed one of them, "if there isn't Mrs. Governor Robson going right away for the anxious bench! That will make a pretty considerable noise, won't it?"

"Noise? I expect so, my dear," was the reply; "and won't she," added the second speaker, "be more the thing than ever with all the highfliers! My! what a sight of parties she'll be giving this Revival, I'll engage for it; and what an unhandsome fix we should have got into, shouldn't we, if we had taken it into our heads to stay away? We should have got no invites, you may be availed of that, I expect."

All this was uttered with very little restraint as to the tone of voice, for the noise produced near the anxious benches by the exhortations or the comfortings of the preachers prevented anything uttered in any other part of the chapel from being heard, except by those very near the speaker. Every word, however, was distinctly heard by Mrs. General Gregory, and every word produced effect.

Before the same hour on the following day, she had been presented to the most celebrated of the reverend gentlemen who were at that time performing at Baltimore, and having with all due



the course she had pursued; she became, in her turn a circle, and felt herself fully as able to sustain a co Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp as she had ever been. But had the sagacity to discover that "highly distinguish Mrs. Beauchamp's essays on the righteousness of listened to with more *gusto* by their mutual acquaint own little sermonettes on the righteousness of the the cause of this long remain a mystery to her. She in short, that the magnates of South Carolina were to sympathise with her rival's enthusiasm than with from this time forward it would have been impossib acquainted with all the circumstances of the case; admired the skill with which she made head against she encountered. Her conversation became a sort of saic, made up as it were with bits of black and white such a skilful mixture of Christian texts, with slave ciples, as could certainly be met with in no country save that of which she had the honour and happiness citizen.

But it answered perfectly; and if Mrs. Colonel I known among the best society of the Union, as a rig rate patriot lady, Mrs. General Gregory was equal toppermost among the right-thinking of the saint knew the duty they owed to the Stars and the Stripe to make up their religious principles square with the

It may in some cases be true that the native *lites* have no great reason to boast of the honours and upon them in their own country, at least, before the

great Barnaby intimacy enjoyed by Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp; and when she discovered, as she did at the party of Mrs. Judge Johnson, that besides the authorship, there was the still nearer and dearer claim to friendship, which Mrs. Barnaby's loudly proclaimed opinion on the *great African subject* gave her, there was nothing which she did not feel ready to do, and to say, in order to obtain a forward and conspicuous place in the good opinion of the family.

No sooner, however, had Madame Tornorino become fully aware of the strongly pious propensities of her visitor, than her ardour to cultivate the acquaintance relaxed; and it is probable that she would not long have delayed betraying some symptoms of this, had not Mrs. General Gregory, either from anticipating this very natural result, or from yielding to her own native propensities, suddenly "changed her hand," and led the discourse to gayer themes.

"But, oh my!" she exclaimed, with a pleasant little laugh, "I must not keep on talking for everlasting this way about chapel-going, and all that sort of thing, to a pretty young lady like you, Madame Tornorino, who in course must have your mind filled up as yet with plenty of other things—in part, you know, I mean, my dear—and that is all so very natural, that I can't say I realise its being anywise improper. You will be pleased to remember, my dear, that my carriage and servants, and myself, too, will be quite at your service, Madame Tornorini, whenever you like to declare your congregation—and I'll take you to the best seat in the chapel for seeing the company and the dresses, as well as for hearing that blessed vessel, Mr. Crawley, pour forth his balm: but if you like it better in the first place, I'll be delighted to take you with me, and your honourable mamma too, if she'll be pleased to go to a first-rate dancing-party to-morrow night, that the lady of our prime newspaper-writer of all this south part of the Union is going to give."

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Patty, cheerily. "I should like it best of anything; that is, if you are going to be so kind as to ask my husband, Don Tornorino, too?"

"Most certainly, my dear, I am. And will you go with me to chapel, next Sabbath?"

Patty paused for half a moment before she replied, and her answer showed that she was improving rapidly in wisdom of all sorts.

"Oh, dear! yes, certainly, ma'am. I suppose that is just the same as going to church in England, which is the best thing, I am sure, that one can do of a Sunday, because you know——"

It was lucky, perhaps, that Mrs. Gregory's general habit of making herself spokeswoman upon all religious subjects caused her to break in at this point upon Patty's speech, as it is possible that she might have completed it by adding—"there is no other place

full of people to go to ;” but when her new acquaintance did it for her, by saying—

“ I do, indeed, my dear—I do know that no place, except the heaven of heavens its blessed self, can be so good for Christians to enter as the chapels and churches of the saints,” Patty was discreet enough to answer—

“ Oh, yes ; to be sure, ma’am, every one knows that of course ;” adding, however, for the sake of a little useful information, “ but you don’t seem to be too stiff to go to dances and parties, ma’am ? ”

“ Goodness forbid, I should, my dear ! ” replied the general’s lady. “ I hold it to be exceedingly sinful to turn my back upon the weak and the sinning, just because I have made my own election sure. I am sorry and grieved to say that there are in the Union some professing Christians, and not a few, I am afraid, who act very differently. If you visit the eastern cities, you will find many such—but they are clearly benighted in their generation—and go about, it is dreadful to think of it, doing mischief instead of good ; for it is the very same people as turn their faces away from their white fellow-creatures, as if they were not good enough for them, that go communing with the very people that wear God’s mark upon their skins. The black descendants of the wicked Cain, you know, my dear young lady, the horrid impure nigger slaves, that wear by nature the mark that ought to warn the people of God to turn away from them, and make them to labour from the rising up of the sun, even to the going down of the same, as the hand of the Lord points out.

“ But we of the south, Madam Tornorino, I am happy and blessed to say, know better. You will never hear of such abominations among the educated and elegant gentry of the slave-holding states—we are quite altogether a different people and population, as I hope your dear mamma will make manifest. And as to not going to balls and parties, my dear, I should blush to show any such weakness.”

This last sentence, as every last sentence ought to do, left a pleasant an impression upon the mind of the person to whom it was addressed, that she remembered nothing which preceded with displeasure ; and when Mrs. General Gregory took her leave Madame Tornorino was quite ready to declare that “ though a quiz in her talk now and then, she was upon the whole a delightful woman, and that she should take good care to be intimate with her.”

CHAPTER XIX.

WHILE the visit of Mrs. General Gregory lasted, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp continued in some sort to keep watch over Mrs. Allen Barnaby, for the idea of her leaving her note-book for the purpose of receiving the civilities of the general's lady, was very particularly disagreeable to the lady of the colonel, and she was determined not to quit her, till the danger was past. Nor was the keeping her, pen in hand, the only use which she made of this interval. She had pledged herself to several of the most important personages in the southern part of the Union that such a book should be written by her English friend on the country in general, and on the slaveholding states in particular, as had never yet appeared from the pen of any European traveller, and which would be calculated to do unspeakable good in every part of the world, as tending to put in a right point of view that which had hitherto been so repeatedly placed in a wrong one.

Having proclaimed this, and received in consequence of it the most cordial thanks, and the warmest eulogiums on her patriotic zeal, it was become a matter of great personal importance to Mrs. Beauchamp, that Mrs. Allen Barnaby should lose no time in giving proof unquestionable, and evidence as clear as light, that she, Mrs. Beauchamp, had in no way misrepresented or exaggerated either the purpose or the power of this distinguished traveller. With this object, she determined, if possible, to induce her immediately to produce a specimen, sufficient to prove; first, that she really was employed in writing on the subject; and secondly, that her manner of treating it was what she had declared it should be.

Hitherto all that Mrs. Allen Barnaby appeared to have done was the scribbling a few words, first on one page and then on another, of her new note-book. This had been performed in the presence of Mrs. Beauchamp; and though that well-educated lady felt that this was very likely to be the way in which books were really made, she felt that she should be better satisfied if she could see a sheet or two of full sized paper, written all over, and with a title at the beginning. This feeling, however, arose much less from any doubts she entertained respecting either the intentions or the capacity of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, than from an almost feverish impatience that the business should begin. Mrs. Beauchamp had a pretty considerable good opinion of her own ability, and she had no doubt whatever that if Mrs. Allen Barnaby would once set to work, there could be (as long as she continued near her) no doubt whatever of her producing precisely the sort of thing that was wished for. Hardly, therefore, had Cleopatra's step ceased to clatter on the stairs, when the lady of the colonel thus addressed the lady of the major—

are positively employed upon such a work as we have about."

"Known for certain, my dear friend?" returned Barnaby, with something like indignation in her tone mean to say that anybody doubts it?"

"I don't mean, I expect, to say anything that could feelings, dear lady," returned Mrs. Beauchamp, "but know our splendid national character better, you will the sort of fineness of intellect which always makes everything that they don't see with their eyes. And that this, taken together with some other of their ways does make out upon the whole the most finished model gentleman in the world. Because you see, my dear lady, doubtingness does not argue any want of trustfulness, seem suspicious and no way noble. But that's what say. For where is the nation to be found who give credit like the Americans? Oh, no! It is not for us for everything is done upon trust here, and if it was never be done at all. But it is just about things where to be got by giving or taking credit that they are so for then their fine national sense tells them, plain enough best way to believe is to see."

"That is indeed a very fine trait to which you have just said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, seizing her note-book, a moment she had laid aside, "that national habit of confidence, and acting so completely as you say upon credit be dwelt upon, and must, I should think, my dear madam, have a very considerable effect upon my English readers;

our patriots. And you, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby, who are smart enough so clearly to comprehend these first-rate qualities, I would, I expect, be the very last to refuse compliance with the wishes of all the people of first standing in New Orleans at this moment present. You would not like to do that, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, I guess?—Say.”

“Not for the universe, my dearest friend!” exclaimed the shoress. “Tell me but what these patriotic gentlemen wish me to do, and I will do it instantly.”

“There is not a single one of them, my dear madam, but what will be availed of your great obligingness,” returned her friend. All that I wish you to do, my excellent lady, is just that you should write out a bit of a sort of introductory chapter, saying what you are going to do, and what you think of all you have seen as to, and your principles and opinions about the slaves; and then write at the top of it the title in good large letters, that should look something like the beginning of a real book, and that, I guess, will be all they wish for just at present; and for this I won’t deny but what they are longing, one and all of them. They took care to avail me of that, I promise you, before I took leave of Mrs. Judge Johnson last night.”

There was something rather abruptly startling to Mrs. Allen Barnaby in this unexpected demand, but being a woman of nerve, instead of a nervous woman, she sustained the attack with great resolution, and after about a moment’s reflection, replied, smilingly, “You are aware, my dear friend, that the book in question is to be the history of my travels through your noble country. Do you think that as yet I have seen enough of it to venture upon writing anything?”

“Oh dear me, yes, my good lady, without any question of doubt you have,” replied Mrs. Beauchamp. “All that we ask for as yet, you know, is just what sort of feeling the first sight of the country produced; and your views, founded upon your own good sense, about the niggers; promising, you know, to study the question deeply as you progress, and then the title; and that’s just about all that we want for the present, so that a mere page or two of writing you see will do.”

“Then a page or two of writing shall be produced immediately,” replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby with decision. “But of course, you are aware, dear madam, that we authors always find it necessary to be alone when we write our books. It is always a terrible pain to part with you, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, but if I am to set about writing at once, I must have a minute or two to myself if you please, just to think about it.”

Mrs. Beauchamp herself seemed to consider that this was no more than reasonable, and hearing Mrs. General Gregory’s carriage drive away at that moment, she got up at once and left the room, *ing as* she went towards the door, “Oh my! how I do envy

you, Mrs. Allen Barnaby! Such a subject to be sure as you have got before you; and such kind and partial readers as you are like to find among us."

"Envy me, indeed!" muttered the over-hurried authoress, as the door was closed upon her; "what idiot fools they must all be to fancy that I have seen any wonders to write about in rather less than a week. The most wonderful thing I know about them is what I got from Donny, as to their every one of them being cheats, and that is curious enough to be sure, and might amuse the folks at home to know, if one did but dare to tell it. But this is all folly and nonsense, and as like as can be to quarrelling with one's bread and butter. If they were not the vain peacocks they are, how would my sitting down to write a book about them be so like as it is to make my fortune before it is half done?"

And soothed by this agreeable reflection, Mrs. Allen Barnaby really did set about her task in good earnest, settling her chair, placing a whole quire of paper before her, and fixing a steel pen to her fancy.

"Half done?" she repeated, with a little, quiet, solitary laugh. "Half a sheet will be enough to turn all their heads, and to bring them crawling on all fours to my feet, if I do but put in palaver enough."

And now the important business was actually begun, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby in turning over the first page of her book turned over a new page in her own history also; and she felt this—felt that her genius had now brought her to another epoch of her fate, and she doubted not but that she should date from it the growth and the ripening of honour, profit, and renown.

"What matters it," said she, renewing her soliloquy, "what matters it how or in what manner a book or anything else is managed, so that one gets just exactly the thing one wants by it? It would be just as easy for me to write all truth as all lies, about this queer place, and all these monstrous odd people, but wouldn't I be a fool if I did any such thing?—and is it one bit more trouble to write all these monstrous fine words, just like what I have read over and over again in novels,—is it one bit more trouble I should like to know, writing them all in one sense instead of the other?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby suspended her soliloquy at this point, and began leisurely and critically to read what she had written. She smiled—as perhaps only authors smile, as she perused the sentences which she had composed.

"I always have succeeded in everything that I attempted to do," she said, with a feeling of triumphant confidence which made her grasp her pen firmly, and replenish it with ink as confidently as ever soldier drew his sword, or cocked his pistol; and again she wrote. Page after page became covered with the somewhat broad and square, but tolerably firm characters of her pen, till once again she stopped, took breath, and reasoned a little.

"Well, to be sure," thought she, "these American people do

seem to be out of luck, by their own account, in all the books that have been written about them. Poor souls! By what they say I suppose they have been pretty roughly drawn over the coals, by one and all of the author gentry that have set to work upon them; and then here come I, quite as well able to write a book as any of them, I fancy, and ready enough for my own particular reasons to praise them all, up to the very skies; and yet, somehow or other, I don't suppose that any living soul, but themselves, will believe there is a word of truth in it from beginning to end; and that I do call being monstrous unlucky. But what the deuce do I care for that? I have got an object, I suppose, and my business is to obtain it, without bothering my brains about who will or will not believe all the things that I choose to write down."

And now again Mrs. Allen Barnaby resumed her pen, and the colourless paper became rapidly tinted by her ink.

"It is a good thing, however," she resumed, "that it goes off so glib and easy as it seems to do. If I was always quite sure about the spelling of the words, I declare I think I should find it quite as easy as talking. I do wonder sometimes, where I got all my cleverness from. There isn't many, though I say it that shouldn't—but that's only when nobody hears me—there isn't many that could go on as I have done, from the very first almost that I remember anything, always getting on, and on, and on. There's a pretty tolerable difference, thank heaven! between what I am now with judges and members, and I don't know who all, smirking and speechifying to me, and what I was when my name was Martha Compton, without two decent gowns perhaps to my back, and not knowing where on earth to get another when they were gone! However," added the retrospective lady, smiling, as some comical recollection seemed to cross her mind, "I contrived to manage pretty well even then, and I shall contrive to manage pretty well now, too, or I'm greatly mistaken. There; that's enough for one bout," and so saying, the well pleased Mrs. Allen Barnaby laid the sheets she had filled, neatly together, and went to look at herself for a minute or two in the glass.

"Well," she murmured, again in soothing soliloquy, "if I don't look quite as young as I did when I was Martha Compton, I have gained in dignity quite as much as I've lost in beauty. I do look like a duchess, I'll be hanged if I don't—and I do believe in my conscience, that when I can get the things to put on, I dress as well as any woman that ever lived—I see nobody anywhere that looks as really stylish as I do, and just the sort of thing, I should think, for a fashionable authoress—no shyness, no stupid, awkward fear of anybody or anything. I certainly have, thank God! a great many advantages—and I may thank myself that I know how to make use of them."

In short, few authors ever rose from their first hour of literary labour better satisfied with themselves and their production, than

Mrs. Allen Barnaby. But she had still another hour of leisure before it was necessary for her to begin dressing for dinner, and for an evening party that was to follow after; Mrs. Carmichael having obligingly desired her boarders to invite any friends they liked, as she was going to have a *soirée* herself.

On looking at her watch, and perceiving that this unoccupied interval remained, Mrs. Allen Barnaby's first thought was to employ it by going to seek "Patty and the Perkinses," in order to indulge herself by vapouring a little about her new occupation; but a second thought brought with it a doubt as to how far any one of the three might be capable of appreciating the species of dignity which she was beginning very strongly to feel belonged to her, in her new character, and she therefore changed her purpose into the much more profitable one of sitting down again to her writing-table.

"I know a thing will put 'em all in a rapture of delight," thought Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as she again took up her pen. "I will just write down a list of questions for Mrs. Beauchamp, or her famous Judge Johnson to answer, and they will do double work, or I am greatly mistaken, for I will put them all upon thinking and saying that I am *so* clever, and *so* anxious for information! And the same time it will give them exactly what they seem to be best in the world, and that is an opportunity of talking about themselves, and their country, and their glorious constitution."

She then took a fresh sheet of paper, and after a little reflection produced the following list of interrogatories:—

"In what manner does the republican form of government appear to affect the social habits of the people?"

"How far does the absence of a national form of worship produce the results anticipated from it?"

"At what degree of elevation may the education of the ladies of the Union be considered to stand, when compared to that received by the females of other countries?"

"In what manner was slavery originally instituted?"

"And what are its real effects both on the black and the white population?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby almost laughed aloud with delight, when she had written the above; and in truth she had very sufficient reason to be contented with herself. A very few days had passed since the hour in which she had heard, for the first time in her life, any one of the above subjects alluded to; and had not the admirable quickness of her charming intellect enabled her to catch the very words which she had heard used by the distinguished patriots among whom she had so happily fallen, the writing the above pithy sentences would have been as completely out of her power as the inditing so much Greek. But never did any woman know better how to profit by opportunity than Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and great as was the elevation to which she now appeared likely to reach, it is impossible to deny that she deserved it.

She then began in excellent spirits the somewhat laborious but very delightful labours of the toilet, with a heart as gay, and an eye very nearly as bright, as when she had dressed to meet Lord Mucklebury at her first Cheltenham ball. In truth, everything seemed to favour her projects, and assure her the most unqualified success. The party about to assemble that evening, in Mrs. Carmichael's ample saloon, was likely to be very miscellaneous, inasmuch as every boarder had the privilege of giving invitations, as easily as Mrs. Carmichael herself, an arrangement which could not fail of bringing together exactly such a mixture of "all sorts of opinions," as it would be most desirable for her to "gain golden opinions" from. And golden, or at any rate, silver opinions, she was determined to make them.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was still in the act of adorning—

With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers—


when the major entered. He was immediately struck by the general brightness and animation of her aspect, and exclaimed—

"Heyday, my Barnaby!—what has happened now? If there were any Lady Susans here, I should say that some of them had been making some charming proposal for taking you to court again. Upon my soul, my dear, you look as if you had been eating live birds, and that their bright little eyes were looking out, through your own. Who have you seen?—what have you been doing?"

And though the major as he spoke began steadily enough the business of refreshing his dress, he continued to keep his eyes fixed upon his ample spouse, with a good deal of curiosity, and it may be, with a little admiration.

"Who have I seen, and what have I been doing?" repeated his lady, with a very benignant smile; "as to seeing, Mr. Major, I have seen little or nothing—except, indeed, that everlasting Mrs. Beauchamp. But as to doing—it is not my place to talk about that, Donny, dear. I will just leave you to form your own judgment on the subject; upon my word, we have neither of us any time to talk about it now! for I'm not half done yet; and as for you, your beard is as long as Aaron's, major, though I know you shaved it only yesterday, but that comes of the climate, you know; so set to, there's a good man; and in the course of the evening I will see if I cannot indulge you, my dear, with a little insight into what I have done, am doing, and may be about to do."

"Well, I must consent, I suppose, to live in the dark, my dear, till it shall be your will and pleasure to grant me light," returned her amiable husband; and while the dressing lasted, nothing further passed between them on the subject of Mrs. Allen Barnaby's occupations, except a few mystic, and perfectly unintelligible words, uttered from time to time, by the lady herself.



offended by these hints, and tea, coffee, lemonad drinking, went on very prosperously. At length, M (who, in answer to a question gently asked, had her friend, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that she had no objection mentioning the fact of her having actually begged herself particularly to that portion of the crowded round herself and her splendid English friend

“I have the greatest of pleasure in informing: Judge Johnson, his lady, General Gregory, Mrs. G and in short all the friends that are interested in our talented English lady friend, Mrs. Major Allen done—commenced her elegant and handsome work of the Stars and the Stripes; and I am not that much her kindness, but what I think there is pretty good hope that if the honourable Judge Johnson should quest to the lady, she would favour the company a little of it for their advantage, and that Mrs Barnaby would be clever enough to sit down straight once, and give us the pleasure and improvement of making us acquainted with what she has done.”

This harangue was received by a murmur of approval, and proceeded, not only from that portion of the particularly addressed, but from every quarter of the room. The buzz this produced had a little subsided, the hostess Johnson replied—

“We cannot be more pleased than to hear of your success in the work of the Stars and the Stripes.”

'us, neither can, nor do desire anything better than just to sit ourselves down round about the lady, so that we may not neglect one of the precious words which she is going to have elegant cleverness to read to us."


The consequence of this speech from the richest man in the room was an immediate drawing together of the company round Mrs. Allan Barnaby, while several of the gentlemen began to move forward a table, a chair, and a footstool, for the author moved when she had placed herself, which she did with great success and dignity, every one present got as near to her as conveniently possible, every sofa and every chair being put in requisition, and made to approach the end of the room, whence attraction emanated.

The honourable Judge Johnson himself sat at her right hand and her deeply interested friend, Mrs. Beauchamp, at her left. Miss Matilda Perkins, who had found out a new way of making herself interesting and agreeable to the many tall, beaming-looking American gentlemen who still continued to take so much delightful notice of her, ceased not, in the very central place which she had chosen, to indulge in the most expressive demonstrations of love and admiration for the authoress, and several in whispers breathed into their eagerly presented ears, her dearest of all dear friends, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, was contented by Providence to speak of that unequalled country called the United States of America in the manner it deserved, for that never was, no never, such a woman for talents and learning of all sorts; her crowning phrase being at the end of every whisper "Oh! Madame de Stale was nothing to her!"

The quiet Miss Louisa, only too happy in being permitted to have a place by her friend Annie, sat at an open window at a distance from the more crowded part of the room, while Mr. Egerton, who now paid her quite attention enough to have convinced her sister, had she been its object, that he was only waiting for a favourable opportunity of declaring himself her lover, stationed himself at a convenient point for speaking either to her, or to her "thoroughly American" companion, if he wished it, without any necessity to do it so loudly as to attract the attention of other persons.

The major, who was exceedingly amused, and also exceedingly well pleased by the apparent success of this new exhibition of Mrs. Barnaby's cleverness, had placed himself very much at his ease on one of the sofas that was too large and heavy to be moved, but whence he had a full view of her, and of all her goings on. Being well aware of the audibility of her voice, he had no fear that he should hear every word she spoke.

Patty, who was still too much in love to think it much worth while to listen to anything but her husband, having entered the room when it was full, employed some time in a very active search for him, and at length discovered that her beloved Don was



Mrs. Allen Barnaby bowed with grace and a gentleman who thus addressed her, shook a laver from her pocket-handkerchief, pushed back with left-hand fingers the abounding curls from her forehead, those of her right, lightly passed over the page table before her, to restore its level smoothness, and

“ JUSTICE DONE AT LAST ;

OR,

THE TRAVELS OF MRS. MAJOR ALLEN BARNABY
THROUGH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Having pronounced this title in a voice clear and very sufficiently loud, the lady paused for a moment for the applause she expected, and which failed not to come from Mr. Egerton, whose eyes had been fixed on the book she read it, turned, perhaps involuntarily, to the face of the lady. It might be that he expected to see her delighted at the prospect thus held out of praise conferred on her beloved country ; but if so, he was disappointed, for the fair face of the young lady was tinted with a glow which looked much more like the glow of anger or of shame than of pleasure, and as her eye met his, she turned from him with a look which he could not help thinking was deserved, he never having taken any such liberty as seemed to displease her in his life. He consoled himself by remembering how excessively absurd it would be to suppose himself that he could expect a return which

United States of America, my principal object is to wipe away from the minds of my readers every trace of all that they have ever read or heard upon that subject before ; for till this has been done it is vain to hope that the multitude of important facts with which I have been fortunate enough to become acquainted, can be received as they ought to be. Nobody properly qualified to write upon this wonderful country could behold a single town, a single street, a single house, a single individual of it, for just one single half-hour, without feeling all over to his very heart convinced, that not all the countries of the old world put together are worthy to compare, in any one respect, from the very greatest to the very least, with the free-born, the free-bred, the immortal, and ten hundred thousand times more glorious country, generally called that of the 'Stars and the Stripes!' The country of the Stars and the Stripes is, in fact, and beyond all reach of contradiction, the finest country in the whole world, and the simple truth is, that nobody who really knows anything about it, can ever think of calling it anything else. It is just the biggest and the best, and that is saying everything in two words."

"Admirable!" exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp, raising her fine eyes towards heaven, and then pressing her pocket-handkerchief to them, in a manner that plainly showed the profound sensibility with which she listened to praise so justly due, and so warmly uttered upon the merits of her beloved country. "Oh, it is admirable!"

"Admirable? It is first-rate, ma'am," said the honourable Judge Johnson, warmly. "I expect, madam," he added, turning towards Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "I expect that nobody has yet come among us so elegantly well qualified as yourself for doing the justice that you promise us. I do not mean to speak alone of your particular great talents and beautiful accomplishments in writing, but I guess that it is because you have moved in the very highest of circles yourself that you are more up to the comprehending and admiring everything you have found here, than any of the low, whisper-snapper people as have come before you. That is what I guess to be the reason and true cause of the difference."

"You do me but justice, my dear sir," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with an air that might justly be called majestically modest, "you do me but justice in supposing that I am, rather-out-of-the-common-way capable of appreciating what is noble and superior. Heaven knows that I have no very great liking or partiality to the ways and manners of my own country ; but yet in justice to myself I think it but right to mention that my very last visit in London was to the drawing-room of the Queen. I must beg and entreat that I may not be misunderstood in saying this, and that none of this charming company will suppose for an instant that I think overmuch about queens and kings, and those sort of people. Nobody, I am sure, can be farther from it than I am ; but neverthe-

less, I just mention this to prove that the honourable Judge Johnson is right, and quite correct in what he has been pleased to say about my being capable of judging; and I do believe most truly that the reason why so much, as I am told, has been said about the backwardness in elegance of this most great and glorious country is, that all the people who have come over here before are of an inferior class, and not used so much to the very first circles, as I confess I have been."

"Then the murder's out, and that's the truth of it," exclaimed Colonel Wingrove, a member of congress and a man of fashion, who was one of Mrs. Carmichael's boarders. "All I wanted was to hear some of the English confess it themselves, for it is exactly what I have said a thousand and a thousand times; and it is astonishing to me that common-sense has not pointed that out to everybody, long and long ago. For doesn't it stand to reason that we know what we are our own selves? Who is there, I should like to be told, so capable of judging what our manners are, as the first-rate educated among ourselves? And yet people among us, as ought to know better, are for ever fretting and fuming because half-a-dozen vulgar low-borns, who never knew the elegant luxury of owning a score of slaves to wait upon 'em, have come and gone without having the wit to find out what we really are. For my part, I snap my fingers at them all," continued the gallant colonel, suiting the action to the word, "and so I ever have done. But that's no hindrance to my feeling a true respect for the real lady that is come amongst us now; and I beg pardon for interrupting her so long; and beg to conclude by saying that she may count upon being valued and approved as she deserves to be, for there is not a people upon the whole earth that knows more thoroughly what's what than the citizens of the United States."

Here Colonel Wingrove ceased speaking, and expectorated, while the honourable Judge Johnson bowed to him with the condescension of a man who knows himself to be the first person in the company.

"What you have spoken, Colonel Wingrove, sir, is of a piece with the good sense which we all know you give out in congress, and which is just what in course we all expect from you. But now it strikes me that it is time for Mrs. Allen Barnaby to begin again; though it may be that she would find a drink of lemonade preferable in the first instance; for this glorious fine climate of ours is most times found rather over hot by strangers from northernmost countries, especially if, as in the present case, they happen to be in a room full of company."

Mrs. Carmichael immediately obeyed this hint by clapping her hands; upon which Cleopatra and her younger sister Cloe, who were both in waiting on the outside of the open door, started forward, and lemonade and whisky were very liberally handed round to the numerous circle.

"Now then, honoured madam," said the judge, "may we take the liberty of asking you to progress in your agreeable reading?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby bowed, and immediately proceeded.


"If there is one point that is calculated to strike a reasonable stranger, altogether free from vulgar prejudice, more strongly than any other, at first arriving in this favoured and immortal country, it certainly is the contemplation of the comfort and happiness arising from the institution of slavery."

"God bless my soul!" cried Colonel Beauchamp, roused from his usual apathetic indolence by these stirring words, "that's one of the finest sentences that I ever listened to, either in or out of congress, and I don't care who hears me say it."

"Nobody can hear you say it, sir," remarked the mild-looking George Gregory, "without agreeing in your judgment; unless indeed we were so unhappy as to have among us some desperately malignant Pennsylvanian, or canting Bostonian, or the like, traitors to their country and to common-sense. None other can fail to agree with you in thinking that the last passage read to us by this truly superior lady is a proof of the greatest triumph of sound judgment over canting prejudice (coming as it does from an English-woman) that has perhaps ever been met with. And deeply indeed, madam, ought we to value it, for seldom is it, I grieve to say, that any writers whatever, except among the poor persecuted planters themselves, are ever found to have honest courage enough to speak out boldly in favour of this truly Roman and magnificent institution. But there is one word, one little word, my dear lady, that it will be necessary to insert before your admirable work is sent to the press. Will you give me leave to suggest it?"

"There is nothing, sir," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with mingled gentleness and dignity, "there is nothing for which I should feel myself so deeply grateful as for any suggestions, whether in the way of additions or alterations, to this work, which perhaps I have been only too eager to begin. I am well aware that I must in all probability appear hasty; but my earnest wish——"

"Not a bit, not a bit too hasty, madam," exclaimed the honourable Judge Johnson, interrupting her. "I honour you for your eagerness, madam; and it is never too soon to begin doing what is right. As to suggestions now and then, in the way of addition, you are much too smart a lady not to feel the advantage of it; but I protest that in the way of alteration I don't see the slightest chance of its being called for, or in any way necessary. All we have ever asked of those who came over to enjoy our good things, and take a spice, as I may say, of the elegance and luxury in which we live, all we ask of them is, that when they sit down after going back, to write a book about what they have seen, they should just speak the truth, without fear or favour, and say honestly that the United States of America stand just first and foremost, and highest and noblest, among all the nations of the earth. That's



reckon that in that case we wouldn't care no more dary question than for a flea-bite; and for that matter just that much was granted us—the slavery bogg course included—I really and truly don't think the search itself would be thought any great deal of; let us hear what it was that General Gregory was alteration?"

"Hardly an alteration, judge, hardly an alteration the bland old gentleman; "what I ask for is merely of a word or two. When the lady speaks of the impression which the sight of slavery makes on the people on their first arriving in the United States, I think, so far particularise as to make it clear that the feelings which would arise in case the stranger fortunate enough to come, as the lady herself did, to state in the first instance; for if, instead of that, the thing was to make their first acquaintance with Boston, now, for instance, it is likely enough that they dream of such a thing as slavery at all, and then in that they could not admire it."

"I understand, sir, I understand perfectly," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "you are quite right! The world now stands is exceedingly imperfect, but if any good enough to lend me a pencil for a moment I will

A most surprising number of pencils and pencils

THE AMENDED SENTENCE.

nce, and during this interval there was scarcely a gentleman who did not raise his voice to join in what might be called a chorus of praise and admiration. Mrs. Babby heard, and wrote, and smiled, and wrote again; sooner than under these fluttering and flattering circumstances could have been expected, she once more pushed back her chair, and prepared to read. In a moment every other voice ceased, and she thus resumed:—

“If there is one point that is calculated to strike a reasoner, altogether free from vulgar prejudice, and arriving for the first time in that most highly-favoured portion of the United States distinguished by the high privilege which was sanctified by the immortal Washington, and by the illustrious Jefferson approved”—(a splendid phrase that she had written down from the lips of Mrs. Beauchamp)—“it certainly is the contemplation of the comfort and happiness arising from the institution of slavery.”

“Now then,” said the still wide-awake Colonel Beauchamp, “now then, I think, madam, that you might challenge all authors that ever wrote, to show a sentence more full of sense and wisdom than that is. I am sure, madam, we can thank you enough; and I, for one, beg to say that as long as it is suitable to your convenience and pleasure to continue in the Union, my house and home shall be open to you and yours. What nothing that I and my family can do, shall be wanting to make you feel yourself as if you were a real born American.”

A vast number of voices immediately reiterated nearly the same words; and while this was going on, Mr. Egerton once ventured to look in the face of Annie. It was, however, not with a frown that he met there, neither did any angry glow rise upon her brow. She was, indeed, on the contrary, unusually pale, and he fancied, although she did not raise her eyes, there were tears in them, for their long dark lashes hung heavily over the fringe of a cypress-branch besprinkled with dew, upon her alabaster cheek. But although Annie did not raise her eyes, the young Englishman turned to look at her, it is possible she was conscious of his doing so; for in the next moment she rose from her chair, glided over the space which divided her from the window, and stepped through it upon the balcony.

Not many men of any age can see a very beautiful young woman in tears without experiencing some kindly softening of the heart towards them; but at three or four and twenty, this sort of weakness is usually too powerful in its influence to permit, for the moment at least, the continuance of any harsh or hostile feelings, and certainly Mr. Egerton just then quite forgot the presence of the Americanism of Annie Beauchamp. But what was strange still, though he very greatly wished to follow her, he had not the courage or confidence to do it; but though, upon reaching the balcony, she contrived so to place herself as not to

seen by either him or any one else in the room, he was so much occupied by the image of her pale, sad, lovely face as she went out, that he lost whatever advantage of any kind might have been gained by attending to what was going on in the saloon; for he did not distinctly hear another word.

Pleasantly conscious as Mrs. Allen Barnaby was of her great powers, as well in her new occupation of writing a book, as in everything else, she had nevertheless found, after the first answer or two, that the putting together the fine phrases which had been given above, was likely to be a very great bore; and, to say the truth, when she left off it was because she really did not know what she should say next. It was then that the happy idea of writing down a few questions, to be answered either by her inspiring muse, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, or by some one else of the high-standers whose favour she was so anxious to procure, occurred to her. And now it stood her in excellent good stead; for when, upon the subsiding of the burst of grateful and hospitable feeling just described, the honourable Judge Johnson raised his voice to request that she would continue, instead of having to make the blank reply of—

“Sir, I have got no more,” she was able to answer, in a tone that instead of damping, very greatly increased the interest which had already awakened—

“Now then, my most kind and indulgent hearers,” she said, “I have a great, a very great favour to ask of you,” and Mrs. Allen Barnaby drew forth, from amidst the papers which she had placed upon the table, the sheet upon which she had written her “questions.”

“I have here,” she resumed, “put down one or two inquiries which strike me as being very important, and in which I hope and trust my excellent friends here assembled will be kind enough to give me some information.”

“Assuredly, madam, assuredly!” answered three or four voices at once. “Please to read the inquiries, madam, only please to read them, that’s all.”

Mrs. Allen Barnaby obeyed, and in her most sonorous and impressive accents read—

“In what manner does the republican form of government appear to affect the social habits of the people?”

It was her intention to have gone through her whole string of questions before she paused to invite discussion on them. But this was impossible. You might have fancied yourself in the chamber of congress at Washington, so eager did every honourable member appear to speak on the subject now offered for discussion. But by force of lungs, and the impetus given to his determination to be heard, by the consciousness that he was the richest man in the company, it was the honourable Judge Johnson who finally succeeded in becoming spokesman on the occasion.

THE MERITS OF REPUBLICANISM.

"In what manner? Gracious heaven! my dearest lady every manner! The republican form of government is just as good; without it, you may take my word for it, we should not be so better, or a bit wiser, or a bit more advanced than other people. It is the republican form of government that makes us the citizens, the statesmen, the philosophers, and the rich men that we are. It is the republican form of government that we owe our superiority in all ways; it is that which makes us such fathers and husbands as we are. It is that which makes us feared abroad, and loved at home; and, to end all, it is that which makes us glorious: in one word, it is that which makes us the greatest nation upon the earth, and it is that which will keep us so."

While this was spoken, Mrs. Allen Barnaby sat the picture of mute and earnest attention. Her ear seemed to gather the sounds she heard, as a miser might gather gold; and her mind hoving itself through her intelligent eye, appeared already set to work, in order to form it into implements both of use and ornament, such as might be scattered over the whole earth, to become the most precious treasures of every land they reach.

When at length the judge stopped to take breath, the lady rose from her seat, and, laying her hand upon her husband's, said, in a manner that very greatly touched her hearers—

"Never can the impressive words I have now heard escape from my memory! It was my intention to have written out whatever information I might have been happy enough to obtain in reply to my questions—but for this one, the answer is enough."
HERE."

It is hardly necessary to narrate how these words were received. Cold indeed must be the heart that cannot imagine it! Her tranquillity was again restored, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, who had seated herself, during the moments wherein she had yielded herself as it were, to applause, once more took up her paper to read—

"How far does the absence of a national form of worship conduce to the results anticipated from it?"

"Oh, that's answered in half a word, madam," resumed the judge, who seemed to consider himself the chairman of the committee, sitting to decide upon the lady's questions. "It answers as we intended—and that's enough. We knew before that it would never do for such a people as us to be schooling one another for everlasting about forms and doctrines, and the old man knows what. You may just set down on that bit of the constitution, that it works perfect. And now, if you please, you may go on to the next."

"At what degree of elevation may the education of the females of the Union be considered to stand, when compared to that received by the females of other countries?"

"Oh, my!"

"Well, now!"

"Isn't that capital?"

"I expect that one and all we ladies must answer that for ourselves," were words, which, like winged messengers seemed flying round Mrs. Allen Barnaby in all directions; but happily a tone which showed that if the ladies were called upon to speak for themselves, it was a call to which they should have no objection to answer.

"You may say that, ladies!" said Colonel Wingrove, gaily and politely winking at the most eager speakers; "nobody can answer that question, I expect, as well as your own pretty selves. But I was obliged to say my say on the subject, I know that it will just be to declare, that the gals of the Union beat all creation—not in any wise to mention all the other women in it; and that they do, out and out, and out again, ten millions of times over, in every sort of learning and gentility, as much as they do in beauty."

This gallant speech was received with a regular clapping of hands from all the gentlemen present, while the "gals" sniggered and tittered, and smirked, and brought their heads together in little whispering knots, till at length one very young lady's voice was distinctly heard to say—

"Well, now, I do hope that she will write down that exactly, without changing a word."

"And so I will, my dear young lady," cried Mrs. Allen Barnaby, affectionately; "and my heart dilates with pleasure as I look around me, and think of the happy chance by which I have been called upon to do justice to such lovely and elegant creatures as I see here!"

"Very prettily said, ma'am," said General Gregory, with his usual kind smile; "and I must observe that we have a right, too, to talk of our own good fortune, that has brought us so altogether genteel and understanding a lady to write about us as you are!"

"There is nobody to be found, I expect, general, who will be ready to gainsay that word," said the honourable Judge Johnson. "And now I shall give my vote and interest for our being all silent while this excellent lady goes on with her questions. Now then, ma'am, we are all mum."

"I have but one, or rather I should say that I have but two questions more on my list at present," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby. "I say two, because I perceive that I have divided the subject under two distinct heads; but, if you will give me leave, I will read them both together, as being too intimately connected for division; and if I mistake not, gentlemen, you will feel the subject to be one of very great importance, and of a nature to require the very best and most correct information before I can venture to write upon it—

“In what manner was slavery originally instituted? And what are its real effects, both on the white and the black population?”

Scarcely had Mrs. Allen Barnaby pronounced the words, when so many voices were raised to answer her, that for some minutes nothing could be heard distinctly.

“This will never do, gentlemen,” cried the judge, raising his powerful voice to its very highest pitch, “we are one and all interested in this question, or the devil’s in it. But if you all keep on jabbering together at this infernal rate, just like so many wild geese, when they are settling down upon a common, I should like to know how the lady is to understand rightly a single word you say? I don’t want, or wish, to put myself forward, excepting in fit time and season; but I expect there is no one here that will attempt to deny that the advocacy of my principles upon this subject in congress has done something towards startling the New Englanders off from their infernal abolition nonsense; and if so, I think it is but fair to give me a try, as to whether I can’t startle the Old Englanders a little too. What d’y’e say, gentlemen? Are you willing to let me answer the lady, or are you not?”

However much many of the individuals present might have desired to hear themselves speak a little on this very favourite theme, a very decided majority made it understood that they were willing to accept the honourable Judge Johnson as their substitute; and no sooner was this made perfectly clear and silence obtained, than the judge rose up, and putting himself in the attitude in which he always addressed the members of congress, he thus spoke:—

“As to the first member of your requirement, my good lady, I will just take the liberty of saying that you may go to your Bible for an answer. And if you don’t exactly know where to look for it, there is that excellent pious Christian, the lady of General Gregory, will show you; for she has got it all at her fingers’ ends about Cain being turned black by the hand of the Lord, on purpose that he might become the father of a nation of blacky more nigger slaves: and that’s the top and head of the institution, as I take it. However, I will leave that part of the subject to her, because it is well known to everybody in our part of the country that there is no one, be he priest, parson, or prelate, that understands it better. But I will take upon me, in my own person, to make a reply to the other portion of your inquiry, that being altogether in my own way, and touching direct upon points whereon my principles have been pretty generally received in congress, as standard principles of the wealthiest, the most enlightened, and in all ways the most important, portion of the Union.”

The honourable judge here paused for a moment, spit, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and then proceeded—

“As to the effect of slavery upon the white part of the population, as that is the way in which you have been pleased to put your question, my good lady, whereas we should say, as to its effect upon

the masters, it is altogether a matter too clear to admit of any mistake.

"In the first place, it makes the only real gentlemen in the Union. In the second place, it saves the finest people upon God's earth from the abominable degradation of having no servants proper and fitting, as regular servants, to wait upon them. Thirdly, slavery is known on all sides to be the only way in which the glorious fine sun and soil of this noblest of all countries, can be turned to the best account. Fourthly, there is no other way that we can invest, by which such fortunes can be made in the Union, as may enable some among the free-born of our glorious citizens and immortal republic to keep up the credit of the country, both at home and abroad, in such a way as to give us proper dignity in the eyes of Europe. And now, madam, I will leave off speaking upon this head for the present, because I calculate that I have said about as much as you will be able to remember at one go; but I have got not less than fifty-seven reasons altogether, which I can bring forward, when you are ready for them, to support my principles, but with which I will not now charge your memory, in the fear that you might not remember them all clearly. But this signifies the less, because it is proper, madam, that you keep in mind the necessity of coming again upon this part of your subject, it being greatly beyond all comparison the most important of all. As to your question, about the niggers themselves, poor filthy varment, it is vastly easy to answer it. Just state, if you please, my good lady (saying as you safely may, that it is upon the best possible authority), just state that if, for many excellent reasons, the gentlemen planters had not thought it advisable to take these poor wretches under their protection by making regular lawful slaves of them, so that they cannot, luckily for them, get away,—if it was not for this, you will be pleased to say, that it is satisfactorily proved by all the philosophers as have examined the subject, that they would, beyond all question, in a very few years be found running about in the forests on all-fours, just like any other beasts—unless, indeed, as some think would have been the case, they would come to an end by eating one another up. This, my dear lady, is what we have saved them from, and this is what ought to be put forward before the eyes of all Europe."

"AND SO IT SHALL, SIR," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, again rising, with an air of indescribable dignity. "Blind, indeed, must those be who cannot see the light, when it is thus admirably put before them!"

"Madam! you are a thorough lady!" replied the judge, with a low bow. "And now I put the question, whether we should not be the better for a little more of good Mrs. Carmichael's lemonade for the ladies, and whisky for the gentlemen? And then, to my judgment, it would be most convenient that we should not remain much longer—there being much desirability in our taking ourselves off before this good lady shall have lost out of her head, all that I have been endeavouring to put in it."

CHAPTER XXI.

At twelve o'clock next day, Mrs. Allen Barnaby had received notes of invitation for herself, her family, and friends. These were for dinner and evening parties at New Orleans, as well as for visits of longer duration, which the distinguished persons were entreated to make at the hospitable dwellings of others, during the progress of their proposed tour. To copy these documents is unnecessary, as the same hospitable and generous spirit appeared to pervade them all; but one or two may be given, in justice to the eloquence with which these were expressed. The following are selected without the least partiality of any kind, except what arises from feeling; they are peculiarly well calculated to serve as specimens of the style:—

No. I.

MADAM,—Much has been said, a great deal too much, upon the deficiency of mutual good-liking between the great and glorious United States of America and the Islands of Great Britain. You, madam, have, in your own person, that, as far as the noble-hearted persons of the United States are concerned, the charge is altogether unfounded. Mrs. Major Wigs and myself desire the pleasure and satisfaction—You may observe as a national trait, if you please, madam, that in addressing the natives of Great Britain, persons of the United States never talk of 'doing honour,' and that is a sort of nonsense, and when you, madam, have seen a little of them, you will become aware (for your capacity is already known to be of the best) that they don't stand in a situation for any mortal creature on God's earth to do them an honour. But in relation to business, Major Wigs and his lady hereby request the pleasure of your company, together with your husband, in course, with your travelling companions inclusive, to a ball and supper at the house and plantation called the Levée Lodge, just two miles from New Orleans, this day week.

"I remain, madam,

"With the utmost of respect

"For your individual elegance of mind,

"CORNELIUS ALEXANDER WIGS."

No. II.

MADAM, MY ESTEEMED LADY,—After what was read and heard in Michael's keeping-room last night, I expect it is not very necessary for me to say why it is that I and my lady, Mrs. Colonel Wigs, desire your further acquaintance—we being amongst persons acting in conformity with all reasonable laws, human

and divine, do the best that in us lies, as in duty bound, to up and support the greatly misunderstood and much wrongly ab institution of slavery. You will understand, therefore, mad without more said, why it comes that we so entirely approbat superior elegance of the literature which was displayed to us night. And this brings me to the point and purpose of this sent writing, which is to give you an invitation, and your family all of them with you, to a grand dinner party which my intention to give in your favour on the 19th inst., at o'clock P.M.

"I am, respected lady,

"Your literary admirer,

"MICHAEL ANGELO JEFFERSON STAGGERS.

No. III.

"The honourable Mrs. Secretary Vondonderhoft presents gratified compliments to the highly-gifted and superior-mi Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and, in conjunction with her husband, honourable Mr. Secretary Vondonderhoft, requests the pleasu Mrs. Allen Barnaby's favouring company, together with th the party supposed to belong to her, to an evening *soirée*, v the honourable Mrs. Secretary Vondonderhoft will have the vantage of presenting Mrs. Allen Barnaby to a great numb her friends of the most first-rate standing and consideration, v she flatters herself may be a gratification and every way a vantage to Mrs. Allen Barnaby. The evening fixed fo honourable Mrs. Secretary Vondonderhoft's *soirée* is next M week."

No. IV.

"MADAM,—Your purpose is as noble as are the talent heaven appears to have given you for the means of effectin respect you as you deserve, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and in m; it seems, madam, to me, that I say everything. Myself Governor Tapway will consider it as a pleasure to recei our plantation-mansion on the banks of Crocodile Cre long a time as you and your friends can make it convenie with us; my wish being to show, for the assistance of you that any unagreeable feelings which may have been seen the United States of North America, towards those travelling and spying from the old country, have arisen altogether from the too certain fact of knowing that we w be faulted and abused; whereas you, madam, being alto a new lay in the descriptive line, may look in like mann altogether for a different style of conduct on our ;

no doubt but that you and yours will be satisfied with the

“I remain, madam,
 “Your true admirer
 “And sincere success wisher,
 “STEPHEN ORLANDO BONES TAPWAY.”

besides these, which I have taken the trouble to transcribe on
 out of their peculiar graces of style, Mrs. Allen Barnaby re-
 d no less than eleven other letters in the course of the morning
 h followed the triumphant exhibition of her powers as an
 or, all of them bearing the strongest testimonies of admiration
 esteem, and all conveying very earnest invitations of one sort
 other, both to herself and the ladies and gentlemen in her train.
 n receiving the first of these very gratifying testimonials, Mrs.
 Barnaby, her cheek flushed, and her eyes sparkling with all
 of gratified feelings, rose hastily from the easy-chair in her
 apartment, in which she chanced to be reposing when it
 ed, and was just going to look for her daughter and “the
 inses,” in order to share her pleasure and her triumph with
 , when a second was delivered to her by the grinning Cleopatra.
 returned, of course, to her chair, that she might peruse it un-
 rbed, and then her purpose changed, and it was to Mrs. Beau-
 p that she determined first to display these trophies of success.
 n, therefore, she stepped forward, and again her steps were
 ted by Cleopatra, who now brought no less than three letters
 r hand at once; and so struck was the black messenger herself
 is extraordinary influx of despatches, that having laid down the
 letters, she stood stock still in front of the table, to see how
 English lady looked while she was a reading of them. But
 Allen Barnaby was by this time in a frame of mind which
 red such examination extremely annoying to her, and raising
 oice and her hand so as to command both respect and obedience,
 aid—

Leave me, girl! Leave me, I tell you! Leave me instantly!”
 oor Cleopatra liked not the voice much, but she liked the hand
 still; for not having the slightest doubt but that it was to be
 oyed in the way in which raised hands always are employed
 rds people of her complexion in Louisiana, she actually quivered
 top to toe, for Mrs. Allen Barnaby’s hand was not a small one.
 ring therefore only the monosyllable “Oh!” in reply, she left
 oom much more rapidly than she entered it, and the lady was
 in her secret bower to enjoy unlooked at, and alone, all the
 ious triumph of that happy hour.

he read and re-read the five notes, which now lay all opened
 upon the table before her, and then she sat for a few moments
 tionless and silent reverie. At length, however, her features
 d into a smile, and she exclaimed aloud—



all of us live at free quarters for a twelvemonth at shall take care to make the Perkinses understand pay me if they pay nobody else. That is but fair a if they don't plague me in any way I will let th bargain. What will the major say to me, I wond

And here Mrs. Allen Barnaby almost laughed ceeding glee. But she was not left long to enjo this first full evidence of her complete success, for a not the terrified Cleopatra, soon entered her room three more notes before her; and again, after anothe same black girl returned, her enormous ey enormous still by wondering at the business she wa down four more, and in less than five minutes a with three, thus completing the fifteen, which sees the embassies for the time being.

To say that Mrs. Allen Barnaby felt and looked thus sat surrounded by these white-winged mess would be an expression so pitifully and unsatisfact I forbear to use it. But where may I look for v expressing aptly and fully the state of mind into thrown by this enthusiastic outpouring of patri Look where I will, I shall find none such. It is in for any faculty, or faculties, save imagination alo to her emotions, and to the imagination of my rea task, though only too well aware that of these, r

Allen Barnaby felt her contentment to be so measureless, and so greatly too big for utterance, that she suddenly determined not to mention what had happened to any one till she had first enjoyed it for a little while in secret, and till she felt capable of conversing upon it with less external emotion than she was at present conscious must betray itself were she to enter upon the subject immediately with any one—unless, indeed, it were her lawful husband and partner of her greatness.

"I will lie down!" she murmured to herself, as she passed her pocket-handkerchief across her forehead, "I will darken the room and lie down."

She fastened the blinds, and drew the window curtains accordingly; and then, having laid aside a considerable portion of her apparel, she crept within her mosquito-net, and laid her throbbing head upon her pillow. There is something in the climate of New Orleans which tends so strongly to induce sleep, that probably no degree of happiness could enable any person long to resist it if they indulged in the attitude which Mrs. Allen Barnaby had now taken. Certain it is that many minutes had not elapsed after my heroine had disposed of herself in the manner I have described before her eyes closed, and her regular but heavy breathing proclaimed aloud that she slept. But oh! what a sleep was that! and how far unlike the dull oblivion that falls upon ordinary spirits while the "sweet restorer" is doing his work upon them! No sooner had she forgotten herself, as the common and unphilosophical phrase expresses it—no sooner had she forgotten herself, than a power nobler than memory took its place. Mrs. Allen Barnaby did *not* forget herself, though it was less by memory than by prophecy, that she became in sleep the subject of her own high imaginings. It was probably from the more than common intensity of the emotions which produced these sleeping visions, that she at once gave birth to them in words, and with perfect distinctness exclaimed—

"Pray, move out of the way, Louisa! Do you not see how all those good people are straining and striving to get a glimpse of me? Matilda! it is quite ill-natured to keep standing so exactly before me. It is quite contrary to my temper and disposition to torment people so. Oh yes, certainly," she continued, varying her tone, as if speaking courteously to some stranger, "yes, certainly, my lord. If you will just push that golden inkstand a little nearer to me I will give you an autograph immediately."

For a moment or two she was silent, and then, turning as it were impatiently on her bed, she resumed, in accents less bland—

"It is nonsense, Donny, to think of it. It is not *you* who have written all these books; and if, as you all justly enough say, a title must and will be given, as in the case of Sir Walter and Sir Edward, it cannot be given to *you*. No, Donny, no. It must and will be given to *ME*. Yes, yes; hush, hush, hush. I know it, I know it. I know perfectly well, Major Allen, without your talking



now snored heavily for above two hours, without limb, and on awakening, experienced that feeling of confusion of intellect which often follows sleep thus usually profound.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed, starting up, a wild cry round her. But most sweet was the return which followed. She saw the mass of open books together upon her table. "Is it, then, possible?" "is it indeed true, and not merely the invention of I really at this moment the most distinguished Orleans? And what may I not hope for hereafter on me! I really must keep myself quiet, or I am distracted."

The resolution was a wise one, and kept to be have been expected from the very animated and excited Mrs. Allen Barnaby. She looked at her watch, and it was fully time to begin preparing her dress for set about this necessary business with a deliberate and showed her determined to keep herself and her composed. The result of this was all that she should be. Her ringlets, her rouge, her flowers, all took their respective places, without any trace of arrangement which might reasonably enough have been the existing circumstances. Before her dress had finishing touch, by the arrangement of her white

ite long enough to know that wouldn't answer. Did you ever
any one of them waited for half a second, even among the oldest
stomers, like the Beauchamps, or any of them?"

"I beg your pardon, major, but I cannot exactly think it the
me thing. Nobody, I imagine, would like to sit down till—till
were ready."

The major opened his eyes, but was too busy in adjusting his
avat to remove them from the looking-glass, and Mrs. Allen
arnaby was really too much afraid of shaking her equanimity to
ust her voice in explanation. But when, his hasty reparation of
mself being completed, he turned about and looked towards his
ife, who had quietly seated herself at the table, he perceived the
rge number of open letters with which it was covered, and im-
mediately uttered the expected question—

"What in the world are all those letters, wife?"

"You may read them, Major Allen Barnaby, if you wish it,"
ie meekly replied, while quietly employing herself in securing the
asp of her waist-ribbon.

The major, accepting the permission thus given, immediately
t himself to the task of examination, but had proceeded but a very
ttle way in it, when he gaily exclaimed—

"Well done, my Barnaby! Egad, we are afloat now, or the
evil's in it."

And assuring himself by a hasty glance through the remainder
hat they were all in the same agreeable strain, he actually walked
ound the table and kissed the illustrious fair one to whom they
vere addressed, taking the greatest care, however, to disturb
neither her ringlets nor her rouge.

"I am proud of you, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, I am, upon my
oul," he said; "and what, think you, my dear, will be the best
way to profit by all this? Why, here are no less than nine invi-
ations for staying visits at different country-seats. If we could
out find out, wife, who amongst them enjoys a little piquet, you
know, like Colonel Beauchamp, and who does not, we could man-
age our matters famously. It would be fun, wouldn't it, to be
going from house to house, treated and feasted! you writing your
immortal books, and I raking in dollars every night of my life, and
our own money lying snug all the time? It would be famous fun,
wouldn't it?"

"Why, certainly the mode of life as you sketch it, major, would
be pleasant enough, and profitable too, I dare say," replied his
ady, "if we mind our hits properly. It will be exceedingly ne-
essary, however, to find out who's who, and what's what, before
we decide upon what to accept and what to refuse. I have said to
ll that I would send an answer, and this will give us a little time
or inquiry."

"You are a jewel!" exclaimed the major, with a burst of really
assionate admiration. "But there goes the bell, my darling."

Having reached the chair now constantly reserved for her next friend Mrs. Beauchamp, she placed herself in it with a sort of circular bow that seemed to say, "Pray do not disturb ourselves;" but not even to that favoured lady did she give more than half a smile, and half a nod, accompanied with a languid look and drooping eyelid that seemed to speak exhaustion and fatigue.

"Oh my!" exclaimed her observant friend, "if you aren't regularly done up, Mrs. Allen Barnaby! God bless your dear heart! You have just been working too hard, that's quite plain and clear, and that won't do at all. We shall have you ill, by-and-by, if we don't take care, and then what is to come of our delightful tour? Take my advice, and desire your husband, the major, to send you a glass of his wine. Though I am sure, for the matter of that, Colonel Beauchamp would be first-rate happy to offer you a taste of his, only, gentlemen boarders are generally supposed to know their own lady's taste best. Haven't you been writing an inaccountable quantity to-day, Mrs. Allen Barnaby?—Say."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby in reply to this question turned her benignant countenance upon her friend. There was a gentle and very charming smile upon it, but the eyes were considerably more than half-closed, and for a few seconds she suffered herself to be looked at in silence; then she said, shaking her head, and smiling if possible with still more benignity—

"Oh no! You are quite mistaken, dear lady; I have not written a single line."

There was a look of blank disappointment on the countenance of Mrs. Beauchamp on hearing this, which recalled Mrs. Allen Barnaby to the necessity of not losing any birds already in her hand, while starting away to look after others which were still in the bush; she therefore so far recalled herself to the passing moment as to say—

"You look surprised, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, and so you well may! But your surprise would cease if you knew what a morning I had passed."

"Not sick, I hope?" returned her new friend, with very sincere anxiety. "I'm sure I wouldn't have you take a spell of sickness just now for more than I'll say."

"You are very kind! Oh no! Not sick, or sorry, I assure you; only engaged, too incessantly occupied by a multitude of letters, to do anything but read them."

"My! A mail from the old country, I expect?" replied Mrs. Beauchamp, with a sort of congratulatory smile.

"No," returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby composedly, "not so. All my letters were from ladies and gentlemen—mostly from gentlemen, indeed, who were here last night."

A visible augmentation of colour suffused the cheeks of Mrs. Beauchamp on hearing these words; an effect which was instantly and satisfactorily remarked by the authoress.

"They will be at fisticuffs about me soon, if I don't take care," thought she, "but it will be better for me to carry on everything peaceably, and profit by them all in turn." And with this feeling she smiled with more of peculiar and personal affection on Mr. Beauchamp than she had done before, and said, "I must ask your advice and assistance about all this. In a society so particularly select and elegant, I would not, for the world, offend anybody; but it is impossible to accept all these invitations, and you must help me to decide whom I must refuse."

"What's that about invitations, mamma?" demanded Madame Tornorino, who, like the rest of the company, had remarked something queer in her mother's looks, which now, with her inherited shrewdness, she thought might very likely be the result of more compliments and invitations. "I say, mamma," she resumed, "I beg you will let me know all the invites in time, for I hate to be taken at a hop, and so does the Don too."

"Fear not, my love," replied her mother, with a tranquillising nod, "I will always contrive to give you time enough for dressing. But upon my word, dear, I don't think I can promise to keep a regular calendar of all invitations, it would occupy more time than I can spare. But you may go into my room if you like it, after dinner, and collect all the notes and letters which you will find lying about upon my table, and read them, if it will be any satisfaction to you."

"Ask if you may bring them all down into the drawing-room," whispered Miss Matilda Perkins across Don Tornorino, by whose side it was the pleasure of his young wife that her friend should always sit (thinking it, probably, more cozy and comfortable to keep their party thus far together, than to let any other lady sit next him, particularly "that odious Annie Beauchamp," whom she hated above all things, and towards whom she had more than once caught the beautiful eyes of her Don directed). "Oh, for goodness' sake bring them down, my darling dearest Madame Tornorino!" reiterated her eager friend.

"Very well," was the reply. "Hold your tongue and say nothing about it. I shall bring them down if I like it, and ask no leave, you may depend upon it. I should have thought you might have guessed that without my telling you."

Mrs. Beauchamp, who, though for very different reasons, was quite as anxious about these invitations as Matilda herself, ventured to ask a few questions of her new friend respecting the names of the parties from whence they came; to all of which Mrs. Allen Barnaby replied with *almost* her former affectionate warmth of manner—

"You shall see them all, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp. Don't imagine for a moment that it is possible I could have any reserves with you! Oh no! we must talk them all over together."

"Thank you very much," replied the comforted Mrs. Bea-

champ. "I certainly should like to see who comes forward first and foremost. I told you how it would be, didn't I, Mrs. Allen Barnaby? You won't forget that, I expect?—Say."

"No, indeed! I shall never forget the exceedingly kind and friendly manner in which you have conducted yourself towards me throughout, my dear madam. I shall not easily meet with any one whose society I shall enjoy so thoroughly as I do yours."

There was some comfort in hearing this, but the words did not seem to mean exactly what the same words would have meant yesterday—at least, so thought, or rather so felt, Mrs. Beauchamp. But yet, to do her justice, she did by no means fully enter into or understand the nature of the change she remarked. She thought, indeed, that it was likely enough Mrs. Allen Barnaby might like to listen to other first-rate patriotic ladies, as well as to her, and might wish to compare testimonies together in order to get at the exact truth; but for all the calculations which were going on as to whom she could turn to greatest profit in *other* ways, nothing of the kind ever entered her head. Neither did she long suffer the trifling difference which she had fancied perceptible in the illustrious lady's tone to dwell upon her mind.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself," thought she, the moment afterwards, "for having any such fancies. As if we ought not, one and all, to think of the one great object of having justice done to our country; and there is no danger upon that score as long as this dear writing lady keeps clear of those wicked and rebellious free states that don't scruple to abuse our venerable institutions about slavery, just as bad, more shame for them, as our foreign enemies themselves can do."

So the next time Mrs. Allen Barnaby gave her an opportunity of speaking to her again, which was not immediately—for to say truth that lady had in a great degree lost the comfort she might have found from Mrs. Carmichael's dinners in consequence of the immense importance she had hitherto attached to all that was said to her, and was now making amends to herself for it, by attending much more to the dinner, and much less to the conversation than heretofore. But as soon as she found an opportunity, Mrs. Beauchamp said—

"Do you happen, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, ma'am, to recollect any of the names of the gentlemen who have been writing to you? I can't say but what I should like to know who's come forward."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby, who had just completed the demolition of a very savoury plate, and had been reflecting during the pleasant process on the various words and phrases which had reached her since her arrival at New Orleans, relative to the first-rateness of standing of her already well-secured friend, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, promptly replied, and in accents of perfectly recovered cordiality—

"My dearest friend! I have the very worst head in the world

"FOSBROE" repeated Mrs. ALLEN BARNABY. "I mean, my dear friend? Do you doubt its being possible?"

"Oh my! no, Mrs. Allen Barnaby. No doubt or say could enter my thoughts, you may be very sure. who so well know the general and his uncommon matters, leaving everything to his wife, you know it does seem something like a miracle, that he should write an invitation, specially as his lady was doing this."

"It certainly shows a most amiable and cordial familiarity," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby; "so much so, felt the moment I read their two letters, that it is impossible to refuse the invitation."

"But I do hope and trust, my dear lady," retorted really terrified Mrs. Beauchamp, "that nothing will be able to lead you aside from the plan we have set down together for the examination of all the most important of the Union.—Say?"

"No, dearest Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp," replied the authoress; "most truly may you affirm, both to yourself and me, that *nothing* will induce me to abandon a project to which my understanding are alike pledged, alike bound!"

This was uttered with solemnity, the movement of her fork being intermitted, and the raised eyes fixed on the ceiling.

"Thank God!" ejaculated Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp; "then I don't care a hominy bean for earthly or child. That tour can't be done every day, from Ju

Patty failed not to do as she had declared she would do if it suited her, and as it did please her, to scamper into her mamma's room the moment the party had risen from table, and to scamper away again as fast as she could run, with both her hands full of letters, and a few, *for fun*, secured beneath her chin: she reached a saloon just as the last of the company entered it, and bouncing over to the longest table, bent over it, and discharged the three visions of her load at the same moment.

"There!" she exclaimed; "now then, let's see what it's all about."

"That dear creature's vivacity will never be restrained, let the business in hand be ever so important!" observed her mother, moving with a very slow and deliberate pace towards the table.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was in truth in no great hurry to reach it; for not only the ardent eager-minded Miss Matilda Perkins was ready bending over the still open despatches, and possessing herself of their contents with the most assiduous industry, but very many others of the party were doing exactly the same thing, without the slightest shadow of restraint or ceremony; and as the lady to whom they were addressed happened to prefer their being read by all the world, she had no wish to check the operation by her presence. But Mrs. Allen Barnaby showed her English ignorance by thus restraining her steps—nothing short of her withdrawing her letters altogether, or so folding them up that no portion of their contents could be seen, would have sufficed to check it.

The lively Patty, however, either from consideration for those who could not find room to place themselves where they could read the various pages thus displayed, or else because she thought it a capital joke to show off to all the set at once how much they were in fashion, began reading them aloud with great distinctness, and certainly much to the satisfaction of all who listened to her.

"Oh what a madcap!" cried Mrs. Allen Barnaby, dropping into a chair before she had reached even the outskirts of the throng that was pressing round her daughter. "Is not Madame Tornorino a saucy creature, Louisa?"

This was addressed to the greatly-improved and almost gay Miss Perkins, who really seemed to be inspired with new life by the gentle kindness of Annie Beauchamp, the unceasing good-humour of Mr. Egerton, and more still—oh, infinitely more—by the very marked attentions which she saw her dear Matilda receiving from all the American gentlemen who approached her. To this appeal of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, she replied in an accent that really seemed almost fearless—

"There does not seem to be much change in her, certainly, 12^o am."

But what Miss Louisa Perkins said at that moment was of little consequence. The "Ohs!" the "Mys!" the "Possibles!" that she heard from the party round the table, as Patty proceeded in her

lecture, were so exactly everything that Mrs. Allen Barnaby desired, that she attended to nothing else. She caught the eye of the major (who had seated himself at no great distance from her), just as Patty was pompously giving forth the profound admiration and respect of some general, colonel, or major, followed by the most pressing invitation to his "mansion," for as many weeks or months as it would be convenient for the admirable authoress and her party to remain; and the look that was exchanged between them shows their feelings to be in the most perfect conjugal harmony.

"I am delighted, madam," said Mrs. Beauchamp, when Patty had concluded her self-imposed task, "I am first-rate delighted to find that so many of the very highest standing among our gentlemen and ladies appear to be availed of the obligations they are likely to owe you; and I can't enough be thankful to myself for having lost no time in making that fact generally known to all."

"I am sure you are all excessively kind," returned Mrs. Alm Barnaby, arranging her heavy gilt bracelets with rather an absent air. "I perfectly delight in the country, and its charming inhabitants!"

"Wife!" whispered the major in her ear, as he passed by, to leave the room; "come up stairs—I want to speak to you."

And Mrs. Allen Barnaby really wanted to speak to him; so permitting him, with her usual tact, to disappear before she rose to follow him, she extended her hand to Mrs. Beauchamp, with the full recollection of all she had heard of that lady's reputed wealth and station, and said, not quite in a whisper—

"Oh my dear friend! though of course exceedingly gratified by all this, depend upon it, I can never feel for any other person, charming as they all are, what I feel for you! It is quite impossible I ever should!"

What a fine thing is fame! And must not Mr. John Milton have been in some degree mistaken, when he declared it to be

No plant that grows on mortal soil?

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was unquestionably still in the flesh, and yet she had not only found this "plant" growing in the most delightful abundance in Louisiana, but discovered that it was easily convertible to all manner of domestic purposes, from a pot-herb to a garland for the brow. Nay, had she at that moment poured several handfuls of dollars in the lap of Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, that lady could not have considered it more completely satisfactory payment for all she had done, and all that she meant to do for the honour, glory, profit, and convenience of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, than did those few words from her in return. For Mrs. Allen Barnaby had not only acquired fame, but she knew it; and had skill enough at *once* to bring it into current use, as a sort of bill of exchange, which, as long as her credit lasted, would pass very well in payment for most things in a country so exceedingly fond of celebrity and renown as the United States of America.

On reaching her room, Mrs. Allen Barnaby found her husband already there, and waiting for her rather impatiently.

"My dear," he began, "I won't waste any time complimenting you upon the capital manner in which you have set all these funny folks spinning, but I see it all, I promise you, and I admire your cleverness accordingly. What you and I must talk about, my dear, is not how all this has been brought about, but how we can best turn it to account."

"That's quite true, Donny," she replied, with a decisive nod, that spoke as plainly as any words could have done, how completely she agreed with him. "Don't fancy that I mean to content myself by being blown up by all these famous fine words—not a bit of it, I promise you. I don't see any good reason whatever why we should not travel about from house to house, as long as the fancy holds them, living upon the fat of the land, as we shall be sure to do, major, and paying nothing for it but just scribbling and sputtering a little puff, puff, puff, as we go along. Shan't we 'progress' like a steam-engine!"

The major clapped his hands, and laughed aloud.

"By Jove! my Barnaby," he cried, "I think I am more heartily in love with you than ever I was in my life; and I don't believe you've got your equal in the old world, or the new either. To be sure, my love, that's what we'll do! It is exactly the very thing that came into my head as Patty was reading; and it will be perhaps a better spec than even your quick wit is quite aware of. Of course, I am not quite idle on my side; I am sure it would be a shame if I was, and you working away as you do; and I have found out a thing or two about these rich planter people. You, my dear, have got hold of their staple passion, as I may call it, or rather of their two staple passions—that is to say, their vanity about their country and their greatness, and their red-hot terror of losing hold of their slaves. Now you'll keep on *working* 'em on this side, while I'll keep on *playing* 'em, deary, upon another. I find that there isn't scarcely one of these rich slave-holding chaps, who make their niggers wait upon them up and down, from morning to night, so that they do little or nothing but eat, drink, sleep, and spit for themselves—I am told that there isn't scarcely one of 'em who doesn't, more or less, try to keep themselves awake by play. Now can you fancy anything, my dear, falling out much better than that? We shall have to write a letter of thanks, wife, upon my soul we shall, to those precious relations of yours that played *bo-peep* behind the curtain. We shall be living upon roses here—I see it as plain as the handsome nose in your face, my Barnaby. For you may just remember, if you please, that credit doesn't hold out for ever, even in London, and with a fine house, and a fine wife, like you, to back it, Christmas would have been sure to come, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and a few little bills, my dear, would have been sure to come with it; whereas in this blessed

land, it seems exceedingly probable, I think, that we shall make money and spend none."

"Exactly so," replied his wife, bowing to him. "That, Mr. Major, is precisely the scheme I have conceived for us during the next four or five months, perhaps. And then, if my work is completed, and I get paid for it in hard cash, as these people say I shall be, we may then venture, I think, to take a house of our own. I should like it to be in the capital, Donny, if they would but make up their minds as to where that is, but it seems hard to find any two of 'em that agree upon that point."

"Never mind that, my dear," returned the major, laughing; "when we do settle down we will take care to fix upon just whatever we think pleasantest; and if we go on as we expect to do, we shall be able to pick and choose as we like. But now, my dear, let us come to business. To which of all these people will it be best to go to first?"

"To the Beauchamps, Donny. Stick to the Beauchamps, my dear, in the first instance. It will look best, a great deal, because of all the fuss I have been making about my love, and affection, and admiration, and gratitude, and all the rest of it. Besides, they certainly *are* very rich; he is an inveterate card-player, in a safe way, and that she knows how to set a thing going, we have had capital good proof already. So I say, stick to the Beauchamps at first. But, then, you must please to observe that I don't mean to go galivanting in a steamboat all down these everlasting rivers, that they talk about, for I suppose it is a matter of course that we should be expected to pay our own expenses on board, and just think what that would come to, with Patty and her Don upon our hands! Whereas, you'll observe, that when we get to their elegant Big-Gang Bank, that they all talk about, there will be an end of paying—except, indeed, that if the Perkinses really get in there too, I shall expect that they will make us some consideration for it. They need not pay us quite as much as they would at a boarding-house, you know; but they can't expect we should drag them about for nothing."

"My dear love," replied the major, "your notions on every point are so clear, so clever, so quick—in short, so admirable in every way, that I should be a great deal worse than a fool if I attempted to check or control you on any subject of business whatever. Anything of that kind with the Perkinses, I should leave entirely to you. In fact, to say the honest truth, I don't feel that I have tact and skill enough to do anything of the sort myself, but I give you *carte blanche*, my dear."

"Very well, major," returned the lady, laughing, "I understand perfectly. You would like to get the dollars, but you would not like the asking for them. But never mind, my dear, I'll undertake all that, provided you don't object to my using your name a little—I really must do that, major, or I should not be

the thing look right and reasonable, as I should certainly do."

please, my love. My name is your own, you know, you may use it as you like—and luckily they are both gly, that I can't say I care much what you say. But to the time and manner of our starting? What do say to your dear friend?"

to this question, Mrs. Allen Barnaby entered at some n explanation of her views, and as the result will show were, we may leave the conjugal consultation unin-

Beauchamp had left the saloon by her usual point of window, as soon as Madame Tornorino commenced the l of her mamma's letters; for to say truth, there was the manner and bearing of this English beauty which larly irritated the nerves of the young American. ever, followed her example; for no single individual pt herself, seemed without some feeling of curiosity as ts of the despatches that Madame Tornorino was thus ic. Even Mr. Egerton, though hitherto he had not r very strong feeling of interest in the immediate con- or and Mrs. Allen Barnaby, was now evidently listen- rest of the company to these flattering testimonials of and Carolinian esteem; nor did his attention to the air reader relax till she had, in loud and distinct tones, the perusal of every document.

Patty's throwing down the last sheet, and exclaiming, 's all!" he immediately walked up to Miss Louisa offering his arm, said—

not think, Miss Perkins, that we should find the air y very refreshing?"

a moment the kind-hearted Louisa paused to consider e were any possible means by which she could transfer o her sister; but perceiving, on turning her eyes round er, that she was in earnest conversation with Mr. nsthackle, she smiled a ready assent to the agreeable . taking the young man's offered arm, walked through dow at which Annie Beauchamp had disappeared.

ng lady, whom for a few minutes Miss Louisa had en, was seated on her favourite bench beneath the with her eyes fixed in rather a vacant glance upon ge-tree immediately opposite to her.

r me! There's that nice young lady all by herself!" ss Louisa, using a little gentle influence upon the arm union, in order to lead his steps towards her. "And e you been here, all alone, my dear?" she continued, ie solitary beauty with an affectionate smile. "I ere all in the great room together, listening to Miss-

Patty bawling out those surprisingly kind letters that have been addressed to her mamma. I will not deny that I, for one, was rather curious to hear them, but yet I think if I had known that you were sitting quietly here by yourself, I should have been glad to leave Miss Patty and the letters, for the pleasure of hearing you talk a little."

Annie smiled in return to this speech, but not very gaily, and moving to the end of the bench, made room for Miss Louisa to sit beside her. Mr. Egerton looked a little uncertain what to do, but after the hesitation of a moment, he took advantage of Miss Louisa's evident intention to leave space sufficient for him also, and sat himself down beside her.

As neither of her companions seemed at all inclined to converse, Miss Perkins seemed to think it incumbent on her to talk a little herself, and began accordingly—

"I can't help thinking, Miss Beauchamp," she said, "that the ladies and gentlemen of your country must be the kindest and most hospitable people in the world. I could not have believed it possible that we should all of us have received such a quite wonderful number of invitations, and not one of us knowing a single soul in the whole country, only a few days ago, almost as one may say. I am sure Mrs. O—Mrs. Allen Barnaby I mean, has good reason to praise the country, and all the people in it, if she is really going to write a book, for I certainly think that they are kinder and more hospitable than any nation I ever heard of in all my life before, and I shall always say so, though I shan't write it."

This was a very long speech for Miss Louisa Perkins to make; but still it did not produce the effect she desired, by making her companions talk too, for neither of them spoke a single word. Mr. Egerton might have been seen, however, if any one had happened to look at him, stealing a glance across his neighbour at the beautiful young face beyond her. Perhaps the owner of that beautiful young face was aware of it, for the delicately pale cheek blushed deeply, and seemed to send its bright reflection even to the brow and neck. But the head was instantly turned away, and the curious young Englishman had no opportunity at that moment of criticising its American contour.

"Your sister is trying, I think, to catch your eye, Miss Perkins," said Mr. Egerton; "and, if I am not mistaken, she wants you to go to her."

"Dear me, you don't say so?" said Miss Louisa, hastily starting up, and hurrying away; "and yet I wonder, too, considering—"

But she moved so quickly, that she was out of hearing, and within the window before she could finish the sentence.

The young lady who had been stationed on the other side of her, had so completely turned herself away, leaning over the arm of the bench which they occupied, that she did not appear immediately to perceive her departure.

"Miss Beauchamp!" said Mr. Egerton, gently—so gently, and, that it was extraordinary his voice should have made her start as it did. "Miss Beauchamp," said he, "I have a proposal—mean that I have a bargain to propose to you; will you listen to it?" The American young lady started a little at hearing these words, and upon looking round, and finding herself *tête-à-tête* with the English young gentleman who spoke them, half rose from her seat with the intention of walking away. But the *second thought* which prevented her doing this, not only came quickly, but decidedly; and it was with an air of being very particularly determined to hear him, and to answer him, too, that she turned herself round, and said—

"Yes, sir, I am quite willing to listen to you."

Frederick Egerton would perhaps have been less disconcerted if she had answered less complyingly; but marvelling at his own folly in feeling thus, he rallied, and proceeded pretty nearly in the manner he had intended.

"That is very obliging," he said, "and I will not detain you long. What I wish to propose, Miss Beauchamp, is this: let us mutually agree not definitely to form any opinion of each other's country and countrymen and countrywomen," he added, with a smile, "till we are fairly enabled to do so by having rather more general information on the subject than we either of us possess at present."

Annie eyed him almost steadily, for about a second, and then smiled a good deal for having done so; but she, too, rallied quickly, and replied—

"Perhaps, sir, it would be more like good Christians and reasonable human beings if we did so."

"But if we make this agreement," he resumed, with a smile which had no very malicious expression in it, and which certainly made him look very handsome,—“if we make this agreement, Miss Beauchamp, we must do it fairly on both sides, must we not? I mean that we must not scruple to confess to each other the observations, either favourable or unfavourable, which we may chance to make. This is necessary to truth and justice, is it not?"

Either in the words themselves, or in his manner of speaking, there was something that made Annie blush again; but this emotion, however caused, seemed to make her angry, either with herself or with him, for she knit her beautiful brows as she replied—

"If you wish me to confess that I entirely disapprove and condemn the line of conduct adopted by some of the gentlemen and ladies of New Orleans, towards some of the gentlemen and ladies of England, as witnessed both by yourself and me, sir, during the few days, I am quite ready to gratify you. I do disapprove and condemn it greatly."

"Perhaps you mean," said Egerton, colouring a little in his turn.

"perhaps you mean, Miss Beauchamp, that you disapprove and condemn any and every hospitality or kindness of any sort offered from the inhabitants of your country towards the inhabitants of mine?"

"No!" she replied, but in an altered and less haughty tone. "No! I mean not that. I mean that I am sorry and ashamed to perceive that even the admirable judgment and good sense of Americans can be blinded and rendered useless by—by their prejudices."

Egerton perceived that he had touched a string which vibrated too strongly for pique or pettishness to effect the tone which it produced. He longed to speak to the beautiful and intelligent-looking young creature before him with more of candour and common-sense than he had yet done, but felt strangely at a loss how to begin. He was perplexed not only by his own embarrassment, but by seeking to comprehend why he felt it.

Was he afraid of Miss Annie Beauchamp? Absurd idea! He rejected it indignantly, and, mastering the sort of shyness which had checked him, he said more seriously, and perhaps, too, with more punctilious respect than he had ever before used in addressing her—

"May I venture, Miss Beauchamp, to believe that, in using the word *prejudice* on the subject to which I think you allude, your opinions respecting it are at all like what you suppose mine to be?"

"I would rather have avoided all conversation with you on such a topic, sir," replied Annie, after meditating for a moment; "but yet, I believe that I have no right to think you mean to pain me by speaking on it. Nobody, I believe, supposes that any inhabitant of a slave State can see anything to lament in the laws which exist in it. This is not a very fair judgment—but it is idle to complain of it; for it is only a part of the injustice that is done us. There are many among us who judge you—I mean your country—more fairly, Mr. Egerton. All Americans, as you would find if you knew more individuals among them,—all Americans do not suppose that all Englishmen approve the atrocities practised upon children in your manufacturing districts, nor would they think it right to take it for granted, that you all approve the regulations now enforced by your poor-laws."

Egerton listened to her with great attention, and certainly with great astonishment also. Her words and manner produced, moreover, another feeling, but this related rather to himself than to her. He began to suspect, that he had been guilty of injustice; that he had formed his opinions hastily, and without sufficient grounds, or, at any rate, that he had not allowed enough for individual exceptions; and, with the candour which such self-condemnation was likely to produce, he replied—

"I believe you are very right, Miss Beauchamp. I believe that

we English do all of us form opinions, and pronounce them too, a great deal too much upon general views, without seeking—as we ought to do—for exceptions that might lead to modify them. Your words have suggested this very useful truth, and I shall not forget them. But you will allow, I am sure, that, in order to make this productive of all the good of which it is capable, it is necessary that we should occasionally meet with good sense and candour equal to your own, and that all our attempts to become acquainted with your widely-extended and important country should not be always and for ever met with the broad assertion—that it is the best and wisest in the world. This is a species of information which it is impossible to receive in the sort of wholesale manner in which it is given, and it is often rejected *en masse*, because offered *en masse*.”

These words produced on the mind of Annie Beauchamp an effect exceedingly like what hers had produced on that of Frederic Egerton; that is to say, she felt there might be some truth in them, and the coincidence made her blush again; but she smiled too, and in such a sort, that the young Englishman not only thought her a thousand times handsomer than ever, but he thought also—and very nearly independent of any such consideration—that he should greatly like to converse further with her now that so much of the prejudice, which had mutually influenced them, seemed in so fair a way of being lessened, at least, if not altogether removed.

But exactly at this moment, and before Frederic had advanced further than gently smiling in return, Miss Louisa Perkins came back again through the window, exclaiming—

“Oh, dear me! You are quite mistaken in fancying my sister wanted me, my dear young gentleman; for, instead of that, I believe, between you and I, she would a good deal rather that I should just stay away. It was some time after I went in before I could see at all, for you know they make the room so dark with blinds; but when I did find her at last, I saw in a minute that I had better keep away, for she was talking with another person so very earnestly, that they neither of them seemed as if they wanted any more company.”

This was all said in a manner so unusually lively and with such an air of extreme satisfaction, that it seemed as if her return to the balcony was particularly agreeable to her feelings. Miss Beauchamp again made room for her beside herself, but, whether she was quite as much delighted at this renewed arrangement as Miss Louisa, may be doubted.

As to Egerton, he did not seem at all disposed to leave the matter in any doubt, as far as he was concerned himself; for, without attempting to utter a word in reply to Miss Perkins's information, he started from his place, and, passing hastily through the saloon, left the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER large party, of which Mrs. Allen Barnaby was again very decidedly the heroine, concluded the day, and it was not till the following morning that any opportunity occurred for her to converse with her still more highly-favoured friend, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp, upon the important subject of their approaching departure.

A very considerable change had taken place in the former lady's state of mind, since the subject had been last canvassed between them; and though, in point of time, this interval had not exceeded three days, whole years sometimes pass over us without producing an equally decisive effect. There was, as the reader may by this time be pretty tolerably well aware, a good deal of native decisiveness of purpose in the character of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and when she had determined upon doing anything, she generally did it. But notwithstanding this strong propensity to having her own way, the admirable fund of good sense which she possessed prevented that way, for the most part, from leading her astray from her interest, and therefore, in all former conversations with Mrs. Beauchamp upon the subject of the plans they were to pursue together, she had hardly felt conscious of having any wish or will, except that of ingratiating herself still further in the favour of that lady, and promoting everything that could lead to increasing their intercourse and intimacy.

But now matters were altogether changed, and their mutual position pretty nearly reversed. Mrs. Allen Barnaby felt all over that it was she who was the person to confer honour, and Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp the person to receive it. In her opinion, therefore, it followed naturally that for the future, that lady's wishes and convenience were on all points to give way to her own; and though quite determined not to permit either will or whim—no, not even her own, to deprive her of the solid advantages which she intended to reap from the devoted attachment of the wealthy planter's lady, her mode of addressing her when they were next *tête-à-tête*, approached very nearly in spirit to the celebrated—

'Tis mine to speak, and thine to hear—

of the romance. Nor was she at all mistaken in the calculation she had made respecting the degree in which this was likely to be endured, without producing any disagreeable result whatever. Perhaps Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp was a little surprised to hear that her dear friend had given up all thoughts of the delightful steam-boat excursion they were all to make together; but as to anger, no such feeling ever entered her head, and still less her heart; and her first words were, after becoming thoroughly acceded, *in the*

would have said, of the change which had taken place in Mrs. Allen Barnaby's intentions—

"Then you don't think, I expect, that you should be able to fix yourself for another long journey so soon?"

"I don't think that I shall set off upon another long journey so soon," returned the authoress, slightly smiling; "but not from any fear of fatigue, or over-exertion. Where the mind is forcibly sustained, Mrs. Beauchamp, the body rarely gives way. No! My reasons for this alteration are wholly distinct from any idea of mere personal pleasure, or personal inconvenience. From you, my dear madam, I have no reserves, nor do I wish to have any; the generous, the truly liberal hospitality with which you have invited myself and the whole of my suite to your house at Big-Gang Bank, can never be remembered without a feeling of gratified, and, let me say, grateful affection. I mean, I fully mean, to accept this hospitality, and to repose with my important manuscript before me, under the shadow of your friendly sugar-canes, well-knowing that I can in no way so well prove to you how thoroughly I appreciate your kindness, as by accepting it."

"And there I am sure you are quite right, my dearest lady," replied the really delighted Mrs. Beauchamp. "There is nothing that I know of that would be so always agreeable to me as that; and to my husband, the colonel, I expect, as much as to me. For in course, I calculate upon your husband, the major, not forgetting his card-playing, because he is in the country. He is too smart a gentleman for that, I expect."

"Oh, no! There is not the slightest fear of it, I am sure," returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with an encouraging nod. "The major is really one of the most amiable men in the world, and would rather, I am convinced, play every night of his life to amuse and please so excellent a person as the colonel, than follow any more favourite pursuit of his own. And to make you quite easy on that head, I can assure you that he really does not dislike cards at all himself. All men of fashion with us, you know, are accustomed to play, and rather high, too, even from their earliest childhood, and this of course becomes habitual to them, so that scarcely any of our really distinguished men ever like to go to bed till they have passed their accustomed hour or two at play. So do not let that worry you, dear Mrs. Beauchamp, it will all do very well, I dare say. The major, as you may naturally suppose, has been accustomed to have his attention roused and kept awake by a tolerably high stake. All men of fortune are used to that, I presume, in every country. But there is no danger that our gentlemen should differ about that point—and in short, I look forward to enjoying a long visit to you exceedingly."

Mrs. Beauchamp, who had already begun running over in her mind the different people to whom she could show off her illustrious guest, replied with the most cordial earnestness, assuring her that

there was nothing the colonel would not feel ready and bound to do, in order to show his respect and gratitude for the admirable, elegant expressions respecting the slave business, which Mrs. Allen Barnaby had read up to them.

"On that point," replied our authoress, with a good deal of solemnity, "on that point I shall have much more to say. I consider it, in fact, one of such prodigious importance to this noble country, that I am almost tempted to believe I should make my work of higher utility by devoting my pages wholly to the Slave States, than by mixing up in it any observations concerning that portion of the Union from whence slavery has been so unwisely banished. My general admiration for the whole country, and for all the truly superior people who inhabit it, would render it extremely disagreeable to me, of course, were I to feel myself obliged to blame the principles and conduct of any portion of them. And yet, my dear madam, how could I help pointing the finger of reprobation against those who actually threaten, as one of the gentlemen so well observed the other night, to revolutionise this magnificent and unequalled country, by abolishing slavery?"

Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp was in ecstasies while listening to this speech, and really seemed to restrain herself with difficulty from falling at the feet of the speaker.

"Oh my!" she exclaimed, while tears of emotion trembled on her eyelids; "I expect that you *do* understand the nature of the Union better than any gentleman or lady that ever visited it before! Yes, my dear lady, you are quite right. There is not one of us could bear or abide your speaking any way disrespectful of any part of our glorious and immortal country, and therefore, as you most elegantly observe, it will be far better, and preferable a hundred thousand times over, that you should write wholly and solely upon the great blessings and advantages of slavery, instead of turning away from our quite perfect state, just to belittle the others. Pray God you may keep in the same mind about that, my dear Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and then I shall be only just too happy, that's all."

"Yes, dear lady, that is my view of the case, exactly. And if we can but contrive to keep the good major, and the rest of our party, tolerably well contented and amused in the South and West, I really do not see any reason for our travelling North and East, just to find what is rather *less* perfect."

"Oh my! Yes, dearest Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that is exactly hitting it off to a nicety. *Rather less perfect*, that's just the fact. *Rather less perfect*," repeated the patriotic Mrs. Beauchamp, infinitely relieved by finding that nothing which had been said upon slavery (which was of course the subject nearest to their warm southern hearts) had produced any very greatly reduced estimate of the general perfection of the Union, as a whole, on the mind of the enlightened traveller.

"There is one other point, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, on which I must say a word or two," resumed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with an affectionate smile. "You must promise not to think that my bringing all my party with me is any mark of ostentation. Of course you know that with us an author of any celebrity is considered as paying the very highest compliment possible, by bringing friends with him to any house where he may be invited; it is always considered as a proof that he looks upon the family he visits as worthy to become a part of his own chosen circle; and this feeling indeed is carried so far, that I have known every one of a party of ten, who accompanied one of our favourite writers to a nobleman's place in the country, desired to give their autographs, which were accordingly inscribed in the album of the duchess—the duchess? Yes, I am pretty sure it was the duchess—my own favourite duchess, who is always so kind to me. I just mention this circumstance, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, to show that in bringing my party with me, I am paying you the greatest compliment I have in my power to bestow. And I wish you to be aware, my dear friend, that this is my reason for doing it, and not any foolish feeling of ostentation. I hope you understand this?"

"I do, my dearest lady, most perfectly and entirely," replied Mrs. Beauchamp, warmly. "I feel all your goodness and kindness to me and my country, and nothing shall be wanting that I can do to make Big-Gang Bank agreeable to you. Only dear, dear lady, let me entreat you not to be running away in a hurry. It is a great wide town of a place, as you will see, and there will be room enough for you and your friends, and a heap of folks besides, if you should like more company. And that, my dear lady, is one of the blessed advantages of having a gang of slaves at command. It is likely enough that if you travelled eastward to Philadelphia, and Boston, and New York, or to any of the unfortunate free states, you would find that noble-minded as all the people are, on account of their being Americans, they would be so fretted and troubled about where to get help, that ten to one they would not be able to invite you to their houses, so many at a time, as we can do."

"Poor things! Is it possible that their foolish prejudices keep them in so degraded a condition? It is really pitiable!" returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, adding, with great sincerity, "I really doubt if, under all the circumstances, notwithstanding my reverence for them as Americans, I really very much doubt if I should find everything there as completely to my taste as I do here."

Mrs. Beauchamp again applauded the admirable good sense and discrimination of her friend, and they parted, after its having been made perfectly well understood that the time of their setting off together for Big-Gang Bank, was to be entirely regulated by the pleasure and convenience of Mrs. Allen Barnaby.

Our provident and thoughtful heroine had already written very

eloquent, amiable, and satisfactory letters to all her New Orleans correspondents, in reply to their invitations; and she now stood with a list in her hand of the names and the places, her promised visits to which were likely to maintain the whole party at free quarters for at least six months to come.

"Bravo!" she exclaimed aloud to her heart; "and now for a little visit to the dear good Perkinses."

She found the two sisters in a very comfortable state of mind, and by the help of a little ingenuity in a more comfortable state of body, too, than could have been expected, considering the usual temperature of the quarters that had been assigned them. Their bedroom was indeed almost intolerably small, and intolerably hot; but the good-natured Cleopatra hinted to them that nobody ever came into the wide sort of corridor upon which their attic apartment opened, and which, as is usual in most houses in that region, stretched the whole length of the house, except to look for boxes and trunks, that being the great receptacle for all such articles.

After receiving this hint, which was made intelligible by sundry grimaces, indicating the possibility of putting forth from their crowded room a table and chairs, the sisters ventured, without any more special permission, to establish themselves there during the performance of all the needful stitchery which little wardrobes require; and though its vicinity to the roof gave it rather a fearful resemblance to the Piombi of Venice, it had a strong current of air passing through it, and they both agreed in thinking it better to sneeze than to be stifled.

Here it was then, that with thimble and scissors, and pincushion and wire, and remnants of lace, and well-smoothed knots of ribbon, the fair Matilda fabricated caps and tuckers to her heart's content; while her willing well-pleased sister, sat opposite to her darning the stockings of both. Had they been discovered so employed a few short days before, the scene would have had quite a different aspect; for Miss Matilda might probably have been groaning under the necessity of decorating a head and bosom that appeared of value to no one but herself; and even the more gentle-tempered Louisa, if not equally bitter and fretful in her misery, might have been looking very nearly as sad, from her dread lest the solemn promise she had received from her sister might not avail to preserve her from the self-destruction to which the utter indifference of all the American gentlemen they had yet seen seemed but too directly to lead.

But now the aspect of everything was changed. Matilda was actually talking to her sister and laughing; while the happy Louisa, instead of dreading what she might hear her say next, sat listening and darning, and darning and listening, with the most comfortable air imaginable; and not without hope, perhaps, that among the many pretty speeches repeated to her as having been uttered by

dry unmarried American gentlemen, she might hear something so sounded really *promising*.

"So, girls!" began the panting Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as she roached them, "you are high enough to be sure, at the very tip of all things; but when one *does* get here, it is fresh and pleasant enough. Get a chair for me, Louisa, that's a good soul."

And then, upon the gentle spinster's running off to obey her, dropped into that which she had left, fanning herself with the lightful vegetable fan of New Orleans, which she rarely put out her hand, except when asleep, and turning her ample person in directions to catch the current of air, she exclaimed—

"Upon my word you have managed well, ladies! I'll be hanged [have felt any place so cool since I've been in this stove of a room."

"Oh dear me! I'm glad you like it!" replied the kind Louisa, idly arranging a ragged footstool for her accommodation, and without in the least intending to be ironical, as some might have fancied, could they have felt the atmosphere that was thus applauded. "I do believe it is not much hotter here in the garrets than it is down below."

"Hotter, Louisa! I tell you it's twenty times cooler than our room; but I do believe you two are very sharp and clever in looking after your own comforts, and that's one reason why I think you will be pleased at hearing what I am come to say to you now."

The sisters were all attention, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby proceeded—

"There is no need, I suppose, for me to tell you, girls, that I'm not already to be all the fashion at New Orleans. I suppose you will have found that out for yourselves?"

"I think so, indeed, my dearest friend, and no wonder," returned Matilda; and, "Yes, indeed, ma'am, 'tis quite plain, as you say," chimed in Louisa.

"Well, then, I hope you will be ready to allow that I am, notwithstanding all that, the same good, kind friend you have ever found me, when I tell you that one of my first thoughts has been, how to make you two share in the advantages which all this fashionable admiration brings with it."

"Oh, my dearest, my most adored friend!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Miss Matilda, clasping her hands, and fully persuaded that they were to be taken upon some exceedingly gay visit.

"Listen to me quietly, Matilda, my dear, and you will see that it is not only your pleasure, but your real interest I have got in view," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, gravely. "You know what you pay for your board here, and I am told that in many places it is much dearer still, and it has therefore come into my head, and into that of dear good major too, that we may be able, by a little pains-taking, and some few sacrifices, perhaps, on our parts, we may be

which supplied their wants, would be very greatly relieved and that the nine dollars which they now paid every boarding, might be converted, while these visits were other very much needed purposes.

It was, therefore, rather a blank look that was between them on first hearing Mrs. Allen Barnaby's general but, happily for their peace and prosperity, they both great deal too well to venture anything in the all, approaching to a remonstrance; and Matilda, being her sister, and feeling perhaps less difficulty in utterations of gratitude more expected than felt, broke in time, into a volley of thanks, which sufficed to keep smooth, and not only to insure them the visits, and expense, but to spare them the very disagreeable as they might just take themselves off, and shift for them as they pleased.

"And what do you think of the scheme, Miss M demanded their patroness, turning short round upon lady with a good deal of energy both of look and voice.

"I shall think it a very nice scheme, Mrs. O—Mr naby, if it won't be making ourselves too troublesome replied the meek spinster, blushing a little.

"Oh! Very well, then, that business is settled, get ready to pack yourselves up pretty quickly; for to stay in this horrid hot place many days longer, I

gentleman was engaged at *écarté* at a tolerably high stake, in one of the most fashionable drawing-rooms of New Orleans. Being invited by the major, it followed, of course, from the established habits of the two affectionately-attached individuals, that he was opposite to the elegant son-in-law, Don Tornorino, who never failed to be amused when his respected father-in-law amused himself by playing at cards. Frederic Egerton himself was no great card-player, and knew as little, or rather less, perhaps, about it than most people; nevertheless, he had not remained very long in this position before he saw, or fancied that he saw, certain looks of intelligence steal from beneath the heavy black eyelashes of the Don towards the major. Of course, the moment he conceived this idea, he naturally began to observe more closely; but the doing so did not greatly assist him in positively ascertaining whether the fact was so or not. If it were, it was impossible to refuse to Patty's suggestion all the credit that could possibly belong to a most dextrously performed performance of the task. For if at one moment the glance of his eye evidently fell direct upon the major, it wandered so idly next, here, there, and everywhere, that it was almost impossible to suppose him engaged in any occupation, loyal or disloyal, that demanded attention.

In this manner Egerton was kept in a state of great uncertainty respecting the fact of collusion, or no collusion, between the parties in whom accident had thus made him a spy, and for a longer period than it is usual for a loiterer to remain in any one place. At length, one of the young ladies of the family invited him to listen to a song about to be sung in the next room, and he was then obliged to depart without having at all satisfied his mind one way or the other.

Though there is something rather irritating to curiosity in such doubt as this, Frederic Egerton cared too little about any of the circumstances, to have kept it long in his remembrance, had not other circumstances occurred to revive it there. Why Mr. Frederic Egerton was still at New Orleans, he would himself have found it extremely difficult to say; but though his laundress had been punctual in the most exemplary degree, and though Cleopatra had obeyed all the commands intended to accelerate his departure, with the most scrupulous exactness, there he was still, and probably quite as unable to give any satisfactory answer to a question respecting his future, as to a question respecting his past movements.

For some reason or other, it might be on account of his handsome person and pleasing address, Mr. Egerton had been invited to the parties that were going on; and as at this particular moment everything *English* seemed the rage at New Orleans, thanks to the coming Mrs. Allen Barnaby, he had been told by several of the country gentlemen whose houses were about to be opened to the world, that his company at the same time would be considered a very agreeable addition to the English circle. His answer to

all these civilities had uniformly been that he doubted whether he should be still in the country, but that it would give him great pleasure, that he was exceedingly obliged, and so forth. When it happened, however, that a similar invitation was given him by Colonel Beauchamp, and very civilly seconded by his wife, his reply was not so ready. Considering his intense aversion to Mrs. Ann Barnaby, her husband, daughter, her daughter's husband, and her friend Miss Matilda, and considering that he perfectly well knew that they were all to be of the party, it seems strange that he should have felt any hesitation about giving a decided refusal to such an invitation the very moment he received it. On the contrary, however, though he certainly coloured a little, which looked as if he felt somewhat embarrassed by the invitation, he replied very distinctly that he should have great pleasure in waiting upon them.

This invitation had been given and accepted before the evening on which a suspicion of unfair play, on the part of the major, had arisen in the mind of Mr. Egerton. Had it been otherwise, it is possible that a natural distaste to being thrown into the society of any one of whom it was possible to conceive such an idea, might have caused him to give a different answer; but as matters now stood, the young Englishman felt more disposed to protect the hospitable American planter than to turn away from him, and as a first step towards doing so, determined to have a little conversation with Annie's pale *protégée*, Louisa, for the purpose, if possible, of learning something concerning the position held by the Barnaby family at home. Not, indeed, that he wanted the gentle spinner's evidence to convince him that the father, mother, and daughter were not, as perhaps he would have phrased it, "*de nous autres*;" nor that the son-in-law was not a true-blooded Hidalgo, nor that his friend Louisa herself, or her fair sister, were not ladies particularly well educated or highly bred. All this he might have trusted to his mother-wit to decide for him; but he thought it worth while to discover, if possible, whether the military *chef* of the party had or had not enjoyed the reputation of being an honest man.


It required no very difficult manœuvring to induce the grateful Louisa to walk out upon the convenient terrace with him, even though the doing so involved the necessity of an evident and obvious *tête-à-tête* between them, under the shelter as usual of a blooming orange-tree.

"How do you like this warm climate, Miss Perkins?" he began. "I think you seem to suffer from it less than most of us."

"It does not make me ill at all, Mr. Egerton," she replied; "but I suppose all English people would like a little more cool air if they could get it."

"Undoubtedly. Have your friends the Barnabys been used to such a climate as this before? I rather suppose not, from their appearing so greatly oppressed by it."

"Upon my word that is more than I am able to say," returned



related to General Hubert? I cannot help think mistaken about that, Miss Louisa. I do not think General Hubert should be related to these—to these are with."

"I don't think it does seem very likely, sir, my Miss Louisa, very ingenuously; "but yet I do assure you for I was in their company myself, and my sister when General Hubert, and Mrs. Hubert, and your son, and old Mrs. Compton, Mrs. Hubert's, as they were called then at Brighton. And my sister as they were called then at Brighton. And my sister the tea; so you see, sir, that I could not very well

"'Tis very strange," said Egerton, looking as mystified as the Danish prince himself when using "But certainly, Miss Perkins," he added, after a consideration, "I do not see how it is possible you taken about it."

"Oh no, sir, you may quite take my word for at all mistaken about this relationship. And what continued Miss Louisa, with natural eagerness to companion that she was making no blunder in her statement, more, Mr. Egerton, I have been at a party in their house street, in London, when not only General Hubert and daughter were there too, but ever so many more ladies men also, who were, I believe, related to the general

"if you know the reason which induced the major to be name?"

question seemed to awaken the simple-minded Louisa to anxiety she had been guilty of in so frankly stating to a stranger a circumstance which she had been especially to conceal, and she stammered, blushed, and faltered before she determined how to reply to it; but at length in an accent calculated to remove suspicion, if anything

believe, Mr. Egerton, I have done what they would think of in talking about it at all; but though I must say the first was just thoughtless and nothing else, yet your air, in seeming to care a little about us, because of our glibness, makes me feel as if I had done no more than right and this much I think I ought to say over and into the and that is, that Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as we call her now, ne, and my sister Matilda, the whole history why it was major thought it best to change his name, and that it was for his honour than the reverse, and what many a gentleman, would be proud to tell of."

name of General Hubert, however, probably did more than the testimony of the worthy Louisa's opinion on this point, persuading Mr. Egerton that he was mistaken as to the he had formed respecting the major's style of play. Nevertheless even this could altogether remove a vague feeling of upon the subject, by no means indicative of very high esteem for his well-connected countryman. And it gave faction to think, as he meditated upon the visit he was so edly engaged to make, to Colonel Beauchamp, that at least in some sort be able to repay his hospitality by giving a portion to the game, if it should happen that he and the consort of the authoress should chance to play together at the same time his own visit lasted.

CHAPTER XXV.

minutiae being thus far settled, Mrs. Allen Barnaby very gave Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp to understand that her o find herself at Big-Gang Bank would admit of no lay, her notes having, in fact, exactly reached the point he sight of that "magnificent piece of social machinery, y organised slave plantation" (as Judge Johnson had described it in congress) was become absolutely

This was quite enough to set the active mind and body of Mr. Beauchamp into such a state of excitement, as very speedily brought all preparations depending on her to a conclusion; and even the soporific colonel himself was sufficiently awakened by the intelligence to make him, on hearing it, pronounce in a very decided tone, "My dear, the sooner we set off, the better."

But the most remarkable phenomenon produced by these new arrangements, was the manner in which they were received by Annie; for though disappointed in her hopes of an expedition up the Mississippi, and doomed moreover to endure at her own home the presence of the whole Barnaby, *plus* Tornorino party, in the oppressive character of guests, it did not appear to vex her at all. It was, indeed, quite astonishing to see how well she bore it.

The business of departure therefore was both rapidly and smoothly brought to a conclusion. Mrs. Carmichael wheeled forth her hopes of seeing them all again, and Patty's elegant and pious friend, Mrs. General Gregory, declared that nothing should prevent her forthwith repairing to their plantation mansion, in order to receive the whole party on their leaving Big-Gang Bank.

The journey produced no events particularly interesting, which might partly be owing to the lassitude produced by the heat of the weather; for though it was certainly a great relief to quit the glare of New Orleans for scenes in which they had trees instead of houses to look at, the exertion of travelling equalised the matter, and the Europeans of the party had little energy for anything beyond fanning themselves, and sipping iced lemonade from stage to stage as they proceeded.

At length, however, this unavoidable martyrdom was over, the melting journey at an end, and all the luxuries of a rich planter's establishment around them.

In point of picturesque beauty, Big-Gang Bank had little to boast of, being a wide-spreading brick edifice, situated in a large square inclosure of coarse, ill-kept grass, surrounded by a zigzag fence, and with nothing in sight but a considerable expanse of flat country, covered with sugar-canes, cotton-bushes, and rice-grounds, diversified at intervals by clusters of negro huts. The mansion itself consisted of a lofty centre, and two low wings, the former surmounted by a sort of pointed pediment, in the middle of which yawned a huge round aperture, containing the enormous dinner-bell. The wings, which had no second story, displayed a row of at least a dozen windows in each, and not only along this lengthy front, but round the whole building ran a deep portico, which being lined with orange-trees and pomegranates, redeemed it in some degree from the scorched-up aspect produced by the ill-complexioned material of the building and the defective verdure of the lawn which surrounded it.

But it was not on the expanse of her mansion, or on the beauty of the flowering shrubs which adorned it, that Mrs. Beauchamp

chiefly prided herself, though well aware that it was all very first-rate elegant. But her eye sparkled as the carriages containing her numerous guests drove up to the portico, and she perceived the centre door that was thrown open to receive them, crowded with gaily-clad negroes. About a dozen of these, male and female, ran forward as the equipages approached, ready to perform all offices, necessary and unnecessary, that might be required of them.

Their light summer garb, more picturesque than abundant, was for the most part white, perfectly clean, and set off to great advantage by the mixture of bright-coloured calico introduced into their girdles and turban-like head gear.

"You did not look, I expect, for such an elegant gang of domestic niggers in any private gentleman's dwelling, did you, my dear lady?" said the smiling Mrs. Beauchamp, addressing her most important guest. "But these are not the one half of the household gang, and not any single one of them have any more to do with the canes, or the cotton, or the rice, than you have."

"It is indeed a most splendid establishment!" replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, raising her hand as in admiration.

"It is a great loss as to labour, in course," resumed Mrs. Beauchamp; "but my colonel is a very liberal, high-minded gentleman, and chooses that his wife and his daughter should live in all luxury, according as they have a right to do. Doubtless, dear lady," she continued, with a pitying shake of the head, "you have heard and read enough about the want of helps among the American ladies; and it serves them right too, there is no denying it, for thinking of such a thing as turning a free-born American into a drudge, to come and go at anybody's bidding. True it is, no doubt of it, and very fitting too, that they should want helps; but now, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, ma'am, I flatter myself you will have an opportunity of making your own observations, and finding out for yourself the alone reason why so many of the finest ladies in the world are often forced to do their own dirty work, and will be able to do justice to the real gentility of those who know better what is due to themselves. Walk in, dear ladies, walk in, and pray remember that you may all of you just ring and call as much as you like. Indeed, you'll only have to clap your hands, ladies, in order to bring as many domestic blacks about you as you can want or wish for. Pray make no scruples, and don't fear that you are taking them from out-door work, for they are never sent into the grounds from year's end to year's end, except just for punishment, and then they get their flogging in the fields, which is a deal better, you know, than having it to do in the house."

This speech, which was begun as they left the carriage, lasted the whole length of an enormous hall which traversed the building from front to back, affording by its perfect shade, and the current of air which passed through it, a very agreeable contrast to the heat, which the travellers had been enduring.

"And this is the country," exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with emotion, "which the audacity of English travellers has dared to libel as inferior to their own! I blush to think that I am an Englishwoman."

"Never mind that, dearest Mrs. Allen Barnaby!" replied her amiable hostess, in a tone of the most friendly spirit of consolation. "That is a sort of misfortune, you know, that nobody can help, let them wish it ever so much. But this I will say, that if ever a lady deserved to be a free-born American female, it is you yourself!"

"Dear, kind Mrs. Beauchamp!" returned the travelling lady. "How sweet it is to hear you say so! I would not exchange such praise as those words contain for the richest diadem that ever encircled the tyrannical head of a European monarch!"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby uttering these words, appeared to be overpowered by her feelings, and drew forth her pocket-handkerchief to catch the drops that emotion forced to flow. Fortunately, the black automatons reappeared at this moment, each bearing a tray, the twin of which was in the hands of the other.

Those who have never partaken of iced sangaree when the thermometer stands at a hundred, cannot be trusted to calculate its power of soothing the spirits. Mrs. Allen Barnaby tasted and was revived—drank freely—for it is a mixture that, like Cowper's tea, "cheers, but not inebriates," and was herself again—gay, animated, inspired, and eloquent.

"Well, now!" said Mrs. Beauchamp, looking cheerfully round her, "I do think we shall be as pleasant a party as ever was got together. I wonder what has become of the young English gentleman, Mr. Egerton? I heard him say positively that he would be here to-day, and unless he has right-down lost himself some way or another, I expect he ought to be here by this time; for I calculate he must have come to the same point by steam as we did, only setting off by the next turn. What's that, Annie?" she continued, looking out of the window as conveniently as she could without approaching it. "Is not that a gentleman on horseback?"

"I don't know, mamma," said the young lady, suddenly passing through a pair of folding doors into an inner room. I grieve that she should so have said, because next to Mrs. Allen Barnaby herself, Annie Beauchamp is the heroine of the present narrative; and as the words thus uttered were not true, I feel compelled to acknowledge that she does not altogether deserve the dignified position in which my partiality has induced me to place her.

Annie Beauchamp said that she did not know whether the approaching figure were that of a gentleman on horseback, whereas she did know perfectly well, not only that it was a gentleman on horseback, but that, moreover, the gentleman was Frederic Egerton. Whatever might have been the motive for such falsification, it was of course indefensible, and I must leave her to the mercy of those

to whom I have been compelled by my love of historic truth to make this disclosure.

A few minutes more, and the fact became evident to all, and Mrs. Beauchamp prepared herself again to do the honours of her mansion, her sangaree, and her slaves, in such a manner as to elevate her country in the eyes of another European, to the highest pitch that it was possible for her to reach.

The young man paid his compliments to the circle assembled, with his usual graceful ease, although it did not appear to consist exactly of the party he expected to find there. Perhaps he was disappointed because Colonel Beauchamp was not himself present to welcome him.

Neither the colonel nor his daughter, however, made their appearance till the hour of dinner; the former being engaged exactly in the manner his lady had described, and the latter choosing for some reason or other to pass the interval in her own room.

It was really a pretty room, that allotted to the heiress of Big-Gang Bank, for it was decorated according to her own fancy. It was on the ground-floor, at the north-east corner of one of the wings, and opened by two large French windows upon a very small, but bright and fragrant flower-garden, inclosed for, and kept sacred to, her own especial use and benefit.

And here all Annie's private hours were passed, and all her private studies carried on; and, considering that she did not deal in necromancy, or any other branch of the art usually denominated black, a very remarkable degree of mystery attended the prosecution of these studies.

Annie Beauchamp had for the last year of her life been very busily engaged in educating herself; having with a good deal of acuteness discovered that during the time others had been engaged in teaching her, she had learnt nothing. But in order to perform this double part of tutor and pupil, it was absolutely necessary that she should not be watched; for as everybody excepting herself considered her education not only completed, but completed on the most liberal and extended scale, her own exertions would have been treated as a work of supererogation, which it would be quite as well to leave alone. Moreover, this self-education was carried on in a style that would indisputably have brought upon her as many reproofs for neglecting her studies in one line, as for prosecuting them unnecessarily in another.

Annie had cost her adoring parents a vast number of "quarters" in all the most approved branches of American female accomplishments, to no single one of which she had devoted an hour since she left "college." Algebra and mathematics she wholly neglected; her plane trigonometry she tore into fragments, and made her own little slave, Nina, sweep it all away: astronomy fared not much better; and all the elements of all the ologies were crammed into a

basket together, and carried off in company with the trigonometry. From both music and painting, which had of course been "quartered" upon her as long as she remained in other hands than her own, she also turned resolutely away, not in distaste, but despair. In short, Annie Beauchamp did nothing but read, and that she did with an avidity and perseverance for which nothing but her unlimited credit with a New York bookseller could have supplied materials.

To the scene of all this quiet study, the eccentric little girl now repaired; but instead of taking a book, she placed herself at the greatest possible distance from her reading corner; and seating herself in a low chair, with her fairy feet upon a somewhat high footstool, her crossed arms resting on her lap, and her absent eyes fixed upon the floor, she would have made as pretty a study for the attitude commonly described by the words "nose and knees," as ever was seen. Ere she had indulged many minutes in this half-sulky, half-happy position, which at that moment was particularly well suited to her state of mind, her enjoyment of it was disturbed by the entrance of Nina.

This Nina was a negro-girl exactly of her own age, who had been commanded to play with her in infancy, and elected to the especial honour of being the young heiress's personal attendant from the time of her return from school. She was not suffered, however, to leave the plantation when her young mistress went from home; because, as the confidential manager of the household gang informed his master, she was so "darnation 'cute," that she'd be sure to bring home mischief if she did.

The black and white girls, therefore, had been separated for two months, and despite the tremendous interval between the heiress and the slave, the pleasure of meeting was mutual, though perhaps not quite equal in degree. Annie had many things to think about; Nina had but one, and that one was her young mistress.

The black girl entered through the open window with the light spring of an antelope, and dropping upon her knees before Annie's footstool, seized first upon one delicate hand, and then upon the other, to kiss and fondle them, while she exclaimed in English, as pure as that spoken by her well-read young mistress—

"It is like shade in the midst of the rice-ground."

"What is like shade, Nina?" said Annie, smiling kindly on her.

The girl sighed deeply, and did not answer.

"What is like shade, Nina?" repeated her mistress.

"The sight of something very dear and long unseen," replied the girl. "But it is not like the shade of the free forest," she continued, looking up to the face of Annie, with an expression of great suffering.

"What is the matter with you, Nina?" said the young lady

looking with much surprise at the troubled countenance of her pretty slave. "Do you mean to say that you want me to give you your freedom?"

"My freedom? Do you think, Miss Annie, that it is possible I could ever wish to be free whilst I belong to you? Oh, do not think it! Such a wish never crossed my mind for a single instant since I have been old enough to know what wishing meant."

"Then what *do* you mean, my dear girl? And what does that tear mean, Nina? Why do you look upon me so very sadly? I never saw you in this humour before," said Annie, looking earnestly at the dark face that rested on her knees.

"How should I be able to tell you?" replied the girl, evasively. "Even you, Miss Annie, sometimes seem hardly to know what is passing in your own mind; and do you wonder that with all my ignorance, I should not know more than you do?"

"What have you been reading, Nina, since I went away?" demanded Annie, looking grave. "I think you have been wasting your time with some of those foolish novels. Foolish for you, they certainly are, for they cannot by possibility convey to you a single useful idea."

"I have not.—But never mind now, dearest Miss Annie, about my reading. It matters little what a negro-girl reads, so that she leave not her work undone."

"But why do you look so sad, Nina? You have not told me that, you know," said her young mistress, looking curiously in the large eyes that had not yet been able to wink away their superfluous moisture. "Why are your eyes full of tears, my poor girl?"

"Why the truth is, Miss Annie," said the young slave, "I am sorry you are come home, though I love to see you. I was so glad when I heard you were going to be very happy, and to travel about; and that is the reason, you know, why I may be sorry you are come home again so soon."

"I should scarcely have thought you would have cried about it either," said Annie, looking puzzled for a moment. "But you were always an odd girl, Nina, though a good one too, as times go. But there—go now, I can't talk to you any longer, for I am thinking of something else. You may go into my bedroom, Nina, and unpack all my things, and bring all the books you find into this room. There—go."

At first hearing the word "go," the girl had sprung upon her feet, but even after hearing it a second time, she still lingered.

"I will go," she said, but without moving.

"What ails you, Nina?" said Annie, laughing; "I think you are bewitched. Why do you not go where I bid you? What a spoilt girl you are, Nina! Tell me now, naughty blacky, ought I not to send you to the rice ground?"

"If you did, Miss Annie," she replied, shaking her head, "perhaps I should go more quickly."

She now moved a step or two towards the door, but before she reached it, turned round and said—

"Will you not go, Miss Annie, and pay a visit to the good lady at Portico Lodge?"

"To be sure I shall go and pay a visit to the good lady at Portico Lodge?" replied Annie. "Did you ever know me neglect my kind old friend? But you do not want me to go this very moment, Nina, do you?"

Again the young slave stood silent for a while before she answered, and looked irresolute and embarrassed, as if she had something on her mind that she wished to express, but for some reason or other did not choose to utter it.

"What are you dreaming about, Nina?" said Annie, laughing. "I do believe, girl, that you are in love."

Nina shook her head, sighing, however, at the same time so very deeply, that her mistress laughed again, saying—

"Nay, then, it is so, is it, my pretty blacky? Well, Nina, I hope the beloved loves again, and there is no great doubt of that, seeing that you are acknowledged on all hands, you know, to be the beauty of the whole plantation. But he must be a very nice fellow, Nina, or I shall not give my consent."

"Oh my! Miss Annie!" returned the girl, tears again starting to her eyes, "I wish you would not talk so idly! Go and see good Madam Whitlaw as soon as ever you can. She is a kind lady, and she loves you dearly, Miss Annie; and besides, she knows everything and everybody, and will be likely, if any one can, to—"


Here Nina suddenly stopped short, rapidly turning her eyes away as if to avoid meeting those of her mistress, which were fixed upon her.

"If you are not in love, Nina, you are most certainly gone or going out of your wits," said Miss Beauchamp, waving her off. "And if you don't go away directly, it is very likely that I shall lose mine; for all you do say is as unintelligible as all you do not say. Besides, Nina, I tell you I am thinking of something else."

Once again the black girl heaved a very heavy sigh, and then retreated, leaving her mistress less disposed to meditate upon her mystery and her melancholy than she probably would have been, had she not been, as she said, thinking of something else.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE day following this large influx of visitors at Big-Gang Bank, witnessed the sending off of half-a-dozen notes containing dinner invitations to the six principal proprietors in the neighbourhood.



beloved and respected throughout the neighbourhood but little was known, her immense fortune had been inherited by her by a young nephew, who had himself died almost immediately after he had come into possession of it. Some particulars relating to this nephew, and to the manner in which he had obtained and bequeathed his fortune, became the subject of a narrative published in England some few years ago; but of this Mrs. Clio Whitlaw was herself wholly unconscious; it was the humble simplicity of her character, that she thought it greatly more probable that her dog Watson had been put into a book than herself.

It was on the question of inviting or not inviting the colonel and Mrs. Beauchamp now differed, the former was strongly in favour of the measure, and the latter as strongly against it. A good many *pro* and *con* arguments were uttered on the subject, which it is unnecessary to repeat, the whole of Mrs. Beauchamp's objections resting in the words, "she is not fit to be the colonel; she is, indeed, a great deal too vulgar to be such company as we have got here. Only just think of it, if Mrs. Allen Barnaby was to describe Miss Clio in her book as a first-rate American lady?"

"Mrs. Allen Barnaby is much too superior-minded to say any such thing, my dear," replied the colonel. "He is altogether fixed on the great national question of slavery, and that being the case, there is small chance of his being otherwise."

AYS IN AMERICA.

my dear, who seemed to me to do as this sleepy colonel. Will you believe

great fool, my dear," he replied, "after you already, should I begin to doubt you in any way, my Barnaby, and I will just go to bed. I suspect you are right about his quiet. I see he hates losing. But we can't do it won't do for us to be here for nothing."

My luck run against him the whole night. I leave that all in your own hands. It is like mixing one little bit of heaven into a dish of earth. He begins every game afterwards under the impression that he had rather not and upon you, and saying that he had rather not

chucked his wife under the chin, gave her a very good, and so the discussion ended. Of the party managed very tolerably well; what with the prodigious quantity of eating and drinking, the extreme hospitality of their entertainers, they passed those days pleasantly enough. Miss Matilda Perceval was perhaps the only one of the party not exactly satisfied with the advantage of being decidedly with Miss Matilda. They were obliged to pay for it; but here the only single man of the company had most decidedly devoted all his personal partiality to the elder sister, appearing to forget altogether any such person as the interesting Matilda existed. Tornorino, accepting during the hours in which by special agreement he was to attend upon his father-in-law, appeared wholly devoted to the pleasant occupations of making himself amused and watching her conjugal affectings his wife in good humour; while his lady amused herself in dressing herself in orange blossoms, and watching the odd ways of the blackamoors. And Egerton, how did he amuse himself with the philosophise with Mrs. Allen Barnaby on the admirable of slavery, or did he recreate his spirits by playing piquet for the other, and actually wasted the time that he might spend in becoming acquainted with their strongly-motivated peculiarly interesting characters, in silently watching the arrangements of a slave plantation, in conversing on terms less hostile than heretofore with Annie, and in making it impossible to deny that during this process the American heiress became considerably less inv

not endowed
hinted at having
this species of extrac
of a few other qua
liked than not, in
her altogether a
she seemed to be
sonal attendant
families, great
same relation
which so ev
remove the
holding in
he not c
delicate
ful tea
black
prod
dis
is
hi
f

I been during the early part of their acquaintance ; but the most important step made towards the removal of this very unbearable feeling was by the lucky discovery that the young lady was ; endowed with any accomplishments whatever. She never even thought of having the slightest intention of taking a degree ; and a species of extraordinary humility, together with the discovery of a few other qualities and peculiarities that he certainly rather expected than not, induced him to talk to her a good deal, and to pay her altogether a good deal of attention. The terms too, on which she seemed to be living with the interesting young girl, whose personal attendance upon her was, as may be observed in all plantation families, greatly more close and intimate than can be found in the same relation elsewhere, the tone of this, and the mutual affection which so evidently existed between them, tended very greatly to remove the feeling of dislike which he had conceived for all slaveholding individuals whatever. One consequence of this was, that he not only talked a good deal to Annie, but to Nina too. This delicately-formed young girl, with her large soft eyes, and beautiful teeth, was certainly as pretty a creature as it was possible for a sick girl to be ; and if an individual instance might be taken as a proof, her intelligence might have gone far towards settling the disputed question on the power and extent of negro intellect. It was true, indeed, that her mistress's remarkable neglect of all the other branches of abstract science, had prevented this touchstone from being applied to her powers of mind ; but all that it had been : her power to acquire she had acquired rapidly, and Egerton's carefully cultivated acquaintance with her, while it went far towards exonerating Annie herself from the odious stigma which his heart attached to the holding a slave, convinced him more strongly than ever that there was nothing to be found in the nature of the negro race to justify in the slightest degree the atrocious tyranny by which they have been separated from their fellow-creatures, and branded as beings of an inferior race. Nothing is more interesting, when such thoughts and speculations occupy the mind, than a personal investigation of the subject by means of conversing with some individual specimen of this stranger race, whenever accident gives an opportunity, and it was for this reason, as well as for a slight latent wish to know a little more about the mistress, that Frederic Egerton bestowed so large a portion of his attention upon the maid.

The first two or three days of this rather singular *reunion* at Big-Gang Bank were thus passed by the different individuals of which it was composed, all of them, perhaps, looking forward with more or less curiosity to the enlargement of the circle by the grand inner-party of which they had pretty constantly heard mention. It was on the evening of the third day, which had been one of extreme heat, but which, as the sun went down, became delightful by the fall of a gentle breeze that Annie, either moved thereto by the repeated suggestions of her sable monitor, or by her own kind-



the almost crackling surface of the much-scorch

At the end of the inclosure they reached a g
of which Annie placed her hand, saying to her mo

"I will just step over, mamma, if you pleas
Mrs. Whitlaw. I should not like to meet her a
called upon her. I will be back again in time to

"Why should we not all go, Annie?" ret
"You know the old lady is very fond of being v
and I think our friends may like to see the pl
curiosity in some ways. What say you, gentler

"Why, as for me, my dear lady," replied M
to whom Mrs. Beauchamp had seemed to chiefly
must confess that in this hot climate I do not fe
deal of walking. But don't mind me. I can r

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Beauchamp, perfectl
proposal. "Fancy me letting you walk back
back with you with the very greatest of pleasur
never should have thought of your risking yo
health by a long walk, but Mrs. Whitlaw's be
more than ten minutes from this."

"Oh! well then, we won't part company," r
Barnaby, obligingly. And thus Annie, consideral
and perhaps not very much to her satisfaction, fo
head of an invading army of nine persons, prepa
way into the territory of her old friend. who she

suchamp, as they proceeded; "but our Annie is such a favourite that she may do anything, the odd old lady would never be angry with her. Indeed, the people in the neighbourhood do say," continued Mrs. Beauchamp, with a smile, "that Annie has got a very remarkably good chance of coming in for a share of the great fortune; she will leave behind her, for she has not a relation in the world, and it is quite certain that she takes more pleasure in our Annie's company than in that of anybody else. Our girl will be a fine fortune altogether if that should happen."

Miss Beauchamp was, at the moment when this was spoken, in the earnest conversation with Mr. Egerton; but she suddenly stopped, and turning to her mother said, with a good deal of eagerness—

"I wish, mamma, you would never say that again, and likewise that you would never think it. I know, as I have often told you before, mamma, that you are mistaken. Mrs. Whitlaw has no relations, but she has friends as dear to her as the very nearest."

"Well, Annie, you always scold me about it, I know," replied her mother, laughing; "but it is not my notion only, but that of everybody in the country besides."

"It is rather hard upon her," replied her daughter, colouring, "that she should run the risk of being abused when she dies, for not doing what she never gave the slightest reason to suppose she intended to do while she lived. But do not let us talk any more about such nonsense. Here we are, and there she is, dear good old soul, busy as usual, tying up her darling Virginian creeper to the pillars of the portico."

As strange a figure, perhaps, as was ever looked upon was, in effect, now visible, employed as Annie described, with a huge basket of shreds and nails beside her, a hammer in her hand, and her lanky person stretching itself from the top step of a ladder, which rested against a part of the building. Her head was totally uncovered, save by her own gray hair, and her dress, which was of the richest crimson satin, was tucked up through a pair of pocket holes, leaving distinctly visible two very slender legs, terminated by feet nearly as long as themselves.

Patty, the moment she descried this remarkable figure, burst into a shout of unmitigated laughter; upon which, Mrs. Beauchamp looked vexed, and the eyes of Annie expressed a degree of indignation which immediately suggested to the acute mind of Mrs. Allen Barnaby the necessity of putting some restraint upon their fashionable feelings, in order to conceal the ridicule which must naturally arise in the lively minds of herself and daughter upon the sight of such remote specimens of the natives.

"Do be quiet, Patty!" she exclaimed, in an accent of chiding. "I know very well that you are only laughing at me, just because my foot slipped, I suppose; but because I know it, that is no rule that everybody else should, and therefore I beg you'll be quiet, and not expose yourself by your wild spirits so."



cautiously agitated, and without immediately
and said—

“My goodness, mamma, I wish you wouldn't
it is enough to make the dog laugh. But it is
it? You are so uncommonly fat and clumsy.”

This lively little dialogue brought them to
near for the sound of their approach to be audi
the ladder, who, turning her head, uttered th
my!” and began to descend as rapidly as her
permitted.

“Now this is kind and neighbour-like,” she sa
her thin brown hands, one of which was very c
Mrs. Beauchamp, and the other by Annie.

“I did want to see you again, my pretty
smiling kindly upon the latter, “I always thin
begins to look dismal when you have been a good
who are all these ladies and gentlemen, Mad
Company from the east I calculate.”

“These friends of ours are foreigners, my dea
replied Mrs. Beauchamp, “and I have great ple
them here, both to show them your beautiful pl
you acquainted with them, because I know that
foreigners.”

“I am very glad to see your friends, Mrs.
plied the old lady, with great civility; “but I ex
that you mean were my dear far-away German &

ies, if you please, and your caps too, like me, if you wear 'em. ere is nothing so nice as the sweet air blowing about overhead. rhaps that fat lady (pointing to Mrs. Allen Barnaby) would like s very large chair the best?—Oh my! ma'am! I am afraid you ; very hot," she added, looking towards Miss Matilda Perkins, io, as usual, was fanning herself without intermission; "but that not the way to be cool, ma'am, I can tell you," she continued; rou are working a deal too hard, I expect."

And then she clapped her hands, and two full-grown, and three lf-grown negro girls, instantly entered the room.

"Fan the ladies," said Mrs. Whitlaw; whereupon the little rls and the great girls, placed themselves before the lady visitors, d obeyed the orders they had received with a steady measured ovement of the solace-giving instrument, which was exceedingly ightful to those to whom it was applied.

"How zealously they perform the task," said Egerton, in a half hisper to Miss Beauchamp. "Is it not a pity that the instrument hich their masters apply to their persons in return, should be one oductive of as much pain as of pleasure?"

This was said without any fear of giving offence to the fair stener, for the improving acquaintance between the parties had ready permitted the subject of negro slavery to be freely dis- sused.

"The idea of so painful a contrast would not arise here," plied Annie, in the same low tone, "if you knew a little more of rs. Whitlaw. That odd exterior conceals the gentlest, kindest eart that was ever given to mortal. She would be much more likely) let her slaves flog her, than suffer any one else to flog them."

"And this is the reason why you love her," said Egerton.

Annie coloured a little, for she knew that he alluded to a dis- ussion in which she had thought proper to utter a few sentences a mitigation of the unqualified reprobation he had expressed against he hateful institution; but she smiled too as she answered—

"I love her for everything she does, for everything has so uch self-forgetting kindness in it, that I sometimes think she is ent on earth with that uncaptivating exterior on purpose to show s that we are compound animals, and that beauty and ugliness ay both be met in perfection, in the same individual."

"And beauty and goodness in another," he was tempted to eply, as his eye rested upon her; but he did not, and only said, in n accent of very philosophical composure—

"You really make me long to know her, Miss Beauchamp. ow can I begin a conversation with her?"

"Talk to her about that beautiful plant that you saw her ailing up," replied Annie. The obedient young man immediately ft her side, and approaching the lady of the mansion, said to her ith the air of taking much interest in the subject—

"Will you be so kind, Mrs. Whitlaw, as to tell me the name



“It might be made a long one,” replied Miss Egerton, “but I’ll make it short for you, sir. The ‘identical plant that you see growing here, sir, I got from the smouldering walls of a house that was on the ground, but that had seen some of my work within its walls. I used then to think it a perfect specimen in the way of handsomeness,—though I have found it was just nothing of all that; but this makes me value it more in love, as I look back to it, for it wasn’t the place where they were a set of angels, that’s a fact, and the place where they loved the dearest, and that used to tend the parson’s her own pretty hands, was as beautiful as the place where she came here with, sir, and I don’t need to say anything of her beauty, did I, sir?” concluded the narrator.

“And do you trace any resemblance between the two ladies in the qualities of their minds, as well as in their persons?” demanded Egerton, but without any effect, very steadily in the face of the person he addressed.

“Resemblance in their minds?” repeated Egerton, “meaning, likeness in their goodness, and kindness.”
“Oh my! one might think you knew ‘em both, sir, if it were a thought in your head. Yet they are not just alike in any way; neither; for my Lotte was the merriest, the prettiest little beauty that ever my eyes looked upon, and she was often quite the other way as to merriness. being

say, why that makes a difference between her and Lotte, just in the very thing where there is no difference at all. But the thing is this, you see, sir: Miss Lotte Steinmark hated and abominated the very name of slavery, and was as gay as a lark, because she came from a country where there was no such a thing ever known or heard of, and she could boast of it, pretty thing, for all was free as waited on them here, and she could sing, dance, and be merry. While this dear child, being an American citizen born, and bound in course not to fault anything, little or big, that she sees in her own glorious native land, seems often, I think, ready to break her heart, because all the people about her, the hard-hearted lookers and all, I expect, are not quite so merciful and good as herself. And the case is the harder, you see, sir, because both her pa and ma, who worship the very ground she treads upon, are altogether going the whole hog in the contrary direction. And how can a young thing like that do anything in such a matter, when all the great landholders round, except my poor old self, perhaps, would burn her alive, as soon as look at her, if they did but guess what was passing in her poor little heart."

Rarely have words produced a stronger or more instantaneous effect than did this speech of the venerable Mrs. Clio Whitlaw upon the mind of young Frederic Egerton. It was as if some hard and impassable barrier had been removed, that had hitherto kept him, despite his growing inclination to overcome it, at a chilling distance from the young American, and had no eyes been there to check such a demonstration of feeling, it is likely enough that he would have fallen on his knees before her, confessed all his unjust aversion, together with some other feelings of rather a contrary kind, and implored her forgiveness on the spot. But this being impossible, the young man contented himself for the present by so placing himself beside one of the pillars of the portico, as to gaze on the innocent young face, whose influence he had so stoutly resisted, without being remarked even by the sharp bright eyes of Miss Patty.

"It is a pretty shady bit, isn't it, sir?" said Mrs. Whitlaw, looking at him complacently, "and I hope you'll come up and enjoy it whenever you like to take a stroll from Big-Gang Bank. Isn't that an unlucky name, sir, after what I have been a telling you? I'll lay a piccinne to a cent, young gentleman, that pretty Annie will free every nigger upon the estate, and then sell every acre of it, and be off to some right-down free country, as soon as ever it comes into her hands. But I mustn't stay talking to you any more now, sir, or Madame Beauchamp will think I don't know what's what."

And so saying, she began disengaging the skirt of her rich satin dress from the pocket-holes, an operation which she had hitherto neglected, and having succeeded in completing it, returned into the saloon.

Though Frederic Egerton once more found himself by the side

more communicative, considerably more silent than usual. He could be found words to tell her that he adored her because her principles and feelings were in direct opposition to those of her people. That his heart was ready to swear allegiance to her in one, because he had made the fortunate discovery that the most important feature in the constitution of the country she had been taught to venerate as the most perfect upon earth, was as hateful to her as to him? It was impossible. The conversation between them, therefore, visibly languished; Egerton perpetually relapsing into silence, after every effort made by his beautiful companion to renew the conversation.

The result of this memorable excursion was, that the young Englishman returned to the home of his American entertainers with a fund of hope and happiness at the bottom of his heart which rendered him, despite his grave exterior, one of the most amiable men in the world; while Annie stole early to her rest with her feeling crushed, every unacknowledged, but most precious joy destroyed. A process greatly similar to what had now taken place in Egerton's mind, had somewhat more rapidly taken place in her. Though it was quite true that she hated the institution of slavery, Annie loved her country with that species of instinctive filial feeling which it is a sin to be without, and having been taught, very erroneously, to believe that all English people disliked, and what was much worse, despised all Americans, her first feeling towards the young man were quite as hostile as those of the young man towards her. But it was impossible to converse with Frederic Egerton, without perceiving that no such unreasonable assumption of superiority as she had believed inseparable from the English character, made any part of his. She had discovered that what he most hated and condemned was what she most hated and condemned also; and the feeling of having done him injustice, had for some time been acting upon her mind, exactly as it was now acting upon his; giving to every good gift a double power to charm, and bringing justice to set side by side with inclination, in amending the judgment she had first put upon him. But it was only when she saw, or thought she saw, that he liked her greatly less than she liked him, that she became aware how important his opinion had become to her. There was disappointment as well as mortification in the discovery, for she had thought the case was different. But it was sorrow, without any mixture of anger, that she felt upon making it. She was much better calculated to be a proud patriot than a haughty woman; and would have given infinitely more, could she have honestly said that she believed her country right on all the points in which it differed from its parent stock, than to hear it acknowledged by the whole world, en masse, that she was the loveliest lady in it. Deep-sighing, heavy-hearted, and self-condemning, but with no shadow of resentful feeling against Egerton, the beautiful American bid

young head upon her pillow and wept herself to sleep, while the Englishman lay awake, till night gave place to morning, in meditating how, when, and where, he should confess to her that all his future hopes of happiness depended on her consenting to forsake the glories of the Stars and the Stripes, and accept as an atonement for the sacrifice, his heart, his hand, a noble settlement, and the alliance of an ancient English race, whose motto might very honestly have been—

Sans peur, et sans reproche.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next day brought together the first-rate, high-standing, sharp, elegant, clever, and tip-top fashionable society that was to constitute the dinner-party invited by Colonel and Mrs. Beauchamp, to meet their illustrious European guest. This act of assembling together seemed a very solemn business; nobody, as the circle increased, appeared to think it decorous or proper to smile. The gentlemen compressed their lips, spat and bowed their heads. The ladies made small courtesies, looked grave, and carefully arranged their robes, taking particular care that their drapery should float gracefully on one side only of their persons, according to the hint communicated by a sitting figure in full dress, conveyed to the country in the last number of the *Magasin des Modes*.

At length, however, the whole party being assembled, and as much iced-water and whisky made away with as the season required, Mrs. Colonel Beauchamp thought it advisable, before the dinner was announced, to introduce "Mrs. Major Allen Barnaby" in form, to them all. The scene produced by this was very striking; for there was not a single person present who did not know the obligations she was about to lay them under, and their gratitude bore a very amiable proportion to the benefit which they considered her likely to confer upon them. There are few women who could have gone through this scene with such a perfection of "unbleached majesty," as did Mrs. Allen Barnaby. Had the nature of her forthcoming work, as proclaimed and explained to all, been merely that of a complimentary effusion, extolling the excellences of the country, political, moral, intellectual, physical, and fashionable, and declaring it to be in all these particulars, and every other she could think of, greatly "ahead" of all the other countries in the world, the sensation produced would have been much less vehement. They might have been pleased, probably they would have been very much pleased—but the profound consciousness resting in the inmost recesses of every bosom, that all

this was not a bit more than their due, and that, however good her intentions might be, she must be a damnation smart lady indeed, if she could write up to the pitch they deserved: this consciousness, though it might increase their satisfaction in the contemplation of what she was about to do, would naturally lessen their gratification for they would have felt not only that it was no more than their just right, but moreover that it could not by possibility be sufficient to atone for all the European injustice which had preceded it. But the circumstances of the present case were altogether different. The *especial* point she had *especially* undertaken to advocate, was one on which they felt their weakness, while it was that which, ten thousand times beyond all others, they hung upon with a desperate fondness made up of pride, prejudice, the most ardent love of wealth, and the most craven terror of losing it.

"A present Delty" they shout around,
 "A present Delty" the plastered walls resound—

would be nothing beyond a very fair quotation to exemplify what actually passed on this occasion; and nothing short of the majestic strength of mind with which my heroine was endowed could have enabled her to sustain any appearance of composure under the enthusiastic plaudits which showered upon her head.

How long this might have lasted had dinner not been announced, it is impossible to say, but the flattering clamour was still at its height when the folding-doors of the saloon were thrown open, and a crowd of gaily-dressed negroes outside it gave notice, by their universal grin, that the pleasant business of dining might begin when the company pleased.

This put an instant stop, for the time at least, to the performance of the chorus of adulation which the party had been performing, and the ceremony of marshalling the guests into the dinner-parlour was performed with as little delay as possible.

Though for the most part the brilliant company assembled on this occasion were rather better pleased than usual with themselves and each other, and very fully inclined to do every kind of justice to the splendid hospitality of their entertainers, there were one or two individuals out of the twenty that sat down to table, who would considerably have preferred being elsewhere.

Old Mrs. Whitlaw was one of these. Notwithstanding some trifling deficiencies in this old lady's early education, she had profited, with great natural acuteness, by all the various scenes through which her singular destiny had led her, and was more capable, perhaps, of forming a clear-headed judgment upon the state of affairs in her own particular sphere, than most of her neighbours. Though her views were not sufficiently enlarged for her never to have contemplated very distinctly the absolute abolition of slavery as a national measure, she had long felt persuaded that the way in which the "nigger work," as she called it, was carried on, well

not answer in the long run. Once or twice, on her first taking possession of the mansion she now inhabited, which was her favourite among several which she inherited—once or twice she had hinted to some of her rich neighbours, that she thought it would be better, “for a good many reasons,” if they would relax a little the severity of their discipline; but this was in every case received with such vehemence of indignation that the same straightforward commonsense which had suggested her observations, very speedily determined her to keep them for the future to herself; and for several years past her pretty strong opinions on the subject had only manifested themselves in the management of her own people, and in occasional confidential *tête-à-têtes* with her young friend Annie. Her own avoidance of all discussion on the subject with her neighbours, had been followed by the same sort of discretion on their parts, and it was now several years since the old lady had heard the subject alluded to in general conversation at all.

Great wealth, for which there is no certain heir, generally produces great consideration to the possessor, and Mrs. Whitlaw had profited by this, more than she was herself aware of; she would otherwise, perhaps, have been less shocked and surprised by the vehemence with which, for the purpose of enlightening Mrs. Allen Barnaby, the increase of severity in discipline was insisted upon by some of the party present as the only mode of averting the mischief which some speculators had threatened, from the rapid increase of the negro population. The old lady got fidgety, and was debating in her own mind whether she should not say that she thought the dinner had made the room rather over-hot, and that she did not feel over-well, when the project of escape was put out of her head by a glance and a smile which she saw hastily and furtively exchanged between two of the sable attendants.

It is so universally the custom, wherever slaves make part of an establishment, to treat them as if they were literally stocks and stones, incapable of hearing or of seeing anything said or done before them, that in this case, as in many others, the subject of their own condition was as freely discussed while they were serving at table, as if no such animals had been in the room.

Old Mrs. Whitlaw was too much used to this mode of proceeding for the uncomfortable feelings she experienced to have been produced or even increased by their presence, and it was purely by accident that her eyes had been directed towards the men between whom the above-mentioned look and smile had been exchanged. But the moment she saw it, a strong feeling of suspicion arose in her mind, that one of those movements of resistance which occasionally startle slave-holders, and which act with the frightful but useless energy of a limb convulsed by intolerable pain, was approaching among the slaves of Colonel Beauchamp, and the old lady would have given pretty considerably many dollars, could she at that very moment have transported herself into the midst of her own slaves.

for the purpose of having a little confidential conversation with them. But as this was impossible, she resolved to sit still and quietly look on.

Another individual to whom the splendid banquet, and the popular theme discussed around it, produced a degree of suffering that it required some philosophy to endure, was Annie. No opportunity during the whole of that long morning had occurred for anything to pass between Frederic Egerton and herself which could persuade her that the conclusion to which she had come the evening before respecting him was erroneous.

It was not that she doubted his admiration of her—that would certainly have been difficult, inasmuch as every glance of his eyes betrayed it; for the fascination of her beauty rendered the not looking at her a task, which, however often resolved upon, he found it impossible to perform. Annie was not wholly unconscious of this; but a profound conviction that his having seen her surrounded by slaves, and an agent, however innocently, in the degradation of the race whom, she well knew, he considered in all respects as the equal children of the same Almighty Father, had taken possession of her mind; she considered herself as one stigmatised in his eyes by a blot that could never be removed; and all her energy of mind was now turned to the task of avoiding him as much as possible at present, and forgetting him wholly when he was no longer near. But it was impossible, even for the furtherance of this very desirable object, for Annie to leave the room while the dinner lasted; she too, therefore, submitted to endure its heat and its noise, giving no other indication that she was ill at ease, than the somewhat more than common paleness of her cheek betrayed.

So the party went on with every appearance of universal satisfaction; Mrs. Allen Barnaby's health was drunk, and prosperity to planters and plantations toasted with three times three. And then the ladies retired, they having remained thus long solely in compliment to the heroine of the fête; a compliment which was acknowledged by Mrs. Allen Barnaby's drawing forth from her bag her little note-book, and very evidently employing herself by inscribing therein some of the wise and very sublime maxims which had been uttered by the gentlemen present.

On re-entering the drawing-room, the most consequential ladies of the party immediately crowded around her, beseeching that she would favour them with her autograph, or, if it were possible, with a few words written in their albums. This was the first time that such a request had ever been made to our heroine, except in her dreams; and the graceful manner in which she bowed and smiled her acquiescence, was really admirable. This very gracious and ready compliance with her wishes was no sooner made known, than nearly every lady present flew to the secret corner in which on entering she had deposited her receptacle for wit; which, in fact, every lady who arrived that day had done, with the exception of

Mrs. Whitlaw (who had, as she candidly confessed, no taste whatever for learning); and having drawn it thence, speedily surrounded the illustrious authoress with a perfect galaxy of brilliant volumes, red, green, blue, and yellow, each in succession eagerly spread open before her to receive the valued ornament of her name.

On the first page offered to her, Mrs. Allen Barnaby modestly inscribed that name and nothing more; but perceiving a look of disappointed hope in the countenance of the fair lady who had presented it, she (not manfully, but womanfully) called upon her genius to help her, and resolutely determined, notwithstanding the multitude of the rainbow volumes around her, that every one of them should bear witness of her extraordinary talents.

With a charming smile, she drew again towards her the book in which she had written her name, and wrote above it,

Immortal country, hail!

Finding by the universal "My!" which broke in various notes of admiration from the fair petitioners, that this was exactly the sort of thing they wanted, she continued in the same strain till her task was accomplished. She found no difficulty whatever in producing the slight degree of variety which she deemed necessary, and one lady carried away with her the novel phrase—

Success to the Stripes and the Stars!

another—

The extinguisher of the Old World and the candle of the New!—

THE UNION.

This conceit brought down another shower of the same eloquent monosyllables, and "Oh my!" resounded through the room. It is not necessary to indite every *tour de force* by which Mrs. Allen Barnaby proved her powers of extemporary composition, for though all admirable, they were, it must be confessed, exceedingly alike in sentiment, if not in expression; but in the last, she seemed indeed to surpass herself, and greater than ever was the delight manifested when the happy owner of the last album presented, read aloud these words—

May lawful slavery survive, as long as the sun and moon endureth!

It may easily be imagined that, upon the gentlemen making their appearance, they were immediately made to share in the pleasure which these various inscriptions were so well calculated to produce, and once again Mrs. Allen Barnaby found herself the object of admiration which amounted to enthusiasm.

As soon as the expression of their feelings had in some degree subsided, Colonel Beauchamp observed, that their having met with the most admirable lady in Europe, was no good cause why his sporting neighbours should not be indulged with their usual gear

at whist, or Boston; a hint which immediately led to the summoning sundry negroes, and setting forth sundry card-tables.

While these arrangements were making, Major Allen Barnaby wandered about the room making conversation, of which a jocosse sort of sketch respecting his own caprices about playing at cards formed the principal theme. He laughed heartily, as he declared that it often and often happened to him, that he could not make up his mind to think of any single rule of playing, and hardly to know one card from another; while at another time, if the humour seized him, he could go on at it four and twenty hours together, and never feel tired a bit.

"Well, sir," was the reply from one grandee to whom these little personal peculiarities were revealed, "we must hope that the humour may be on you this evening, for there are two or three here that never find themselves in company without choosing to have a go against the four aces."

Two tables were speedily made up, at one of which two ladies took their places, and the stakes were fixed at a moderate sum; at the other, four gentlemen were to play, and at this table, the fixing the stakes was left to themselves.

"Which party will you join, Major Allen Barnaby?" demanded Colonel Beauchamp, adding very politely—"In course, sir, as a stranger, we should one and all be happy, I expect, to leave the fix to your own choice, putting out of sight our complaisance to your excellent lady."

Out of the four other gentlemen about to sit down, two appeared rather anxious that the whimsical major, to whose account of himself they had been listening, should take his place with the ladies, and one of them said bluntly—

"It would hardly be fair, Major Allen Barnaby, sir, to let you, with the careless ways you talk about, sit down at this table; because I, for one, always play a pretty considerable brisk stake."

"That's the only way to keep me awake, sir," replied the major, laughing. "Men in our profession, as I dare say you know, have generally a few thousands of loose cash floating on purpose to give them a little excitement now and then, when they get a trifle sleepy in their quarters. I have run up and down, for my part, from about ten thousand to nothing, and back again, above a score of times since I began; and I find it has come so even in the long run, that I care very little how high I play. But I never," he added, in a low voice, "I never play with ladies, it puts me out altogether."

This decided the matter, and Major Allen Barnaby, Colonel Beauchamp, and two other gentlemen settled themselves round a table in a quiet corner, as gentlemen do settle themselves when they are going to amuse themselves in earnest.

Had Annie Beauchamp remained in the room, it is likely enough that the hours of that long evening might have offered

opportunities to Egerton too favourable to be neglected, for the making her comprehend a little better than she did at present what were his wishes, his hopes, his intentions concerning her; but, with the blindness of a perverse little mortal, she saw nothing of what was passing in his head or his heart, and she thought of nothing but the silence that had come over him on the preceding evening, when, as she confessed to herself with shame that mounted to agony, she was waiting for every word which might fall from his lips, as if her fate hung upon it. The recollection of these past feelings, together with the blank disappointment which had succeeded them, was more than she could bear any longer *en plein salon*, and begging her mother to apologise to the ladies for her absence, by telling them that she had so bad a headache as to oblige her to go to bed, she stole away, taking with her, as it seemed to Frederic Egerton, all that portion of light which could make it worth while for him to keep his eyes open, and for a few moments after he had watched her retreat, and listened to her mother's explanation of it, he meditated the commission of a similar act of self-indulgence. But he luckily recollected that his going so would neither be particularly polite nor particularly discreet; and he therefore abandoned the project; the more readily, perhaps, because he happened to observe Don Tornorino move quietly away from the place he occupied beside his lady, and station himself at no great distance from his respected father-in-law, about whom he revolved with the same graceful air of nonchalance which had once before attracted his attention.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"My dear," said Major Allen Barnaby, on waking, the morning after Colonel Beauchamp's dinner-party, "I am afraid I won rather too much last night."

"Won too much? What can you mean, good man?" replied his wife, rousing herself from sleep that had produced many delightful dreams. "Does your tender conscience reproach you, my Donny? If so, make over your winnings to me, and the generosity shall atone for—for whatever you reproach yourself with, my dear."

"I don't think it would answer," he returned, in a tone rather too grave for jesting. "The thirst which gets hold of one in this hateful climate forces a man to drink, whether he will or no, and I have a sort of confused recollection of having got rather excited last night, and going it, may be, a trifle too fast."

"Mercy on me! I hope you did no such thing!" she replied, looking a good deal alarmed. "Just think of the horror of having

our beautiful smooth-sailing here spoilt by such a piece of folly as that!"

"Think of it? I can't bear to think of it," said he. "Our only hope is that the others were in the same condition as myself, and will recollect nothing very clearly. But tell me," he added, "wasn't that stiff young Egerton buzzing about me all the time? He looks like one that might be as dry as Etna before he'd ever think of recruiting himself by a dram. Wasn't he hanging about the table, wife? I have a confused sort of notion of having been bothered by it."

"He did nothing the whole evening but watch the players," she replied, looking considerably alarmed. "If this is to be the Curzon-street business over again, what is to become of us?"

"Don't lose your courage, my dear," said he, with a degree of composure that he thought was well calculated to re-assure, "if things don't prosper here, we must go ahead, as the natives say."

"It may be easier to say than to do, Major Allen," she replied, not a little provoked by the indifference with which he appeared ready to sacrifice all the advantages which she had obtained with so much ability. "You may go ahead, as you call it, with such a stone thrown after you as may pretty speedily bring you to a stand still."

"Very likely, my dear; especially if you get a fancy to forget the name I ought to go by. I must beg you won't take to calling me Major Allen, Mrs. Barnaby, or mischief will be sure to come of it. But don't let you and I quarrel, wife. It is too late in the day for either of us to profit by that now. I think we had better change our quarters, I won't deny that; but I dare say that your cleverness will find out some excuse for doing it, that will set all right again. That is to say, if we once fairly get off; for I won't stay, mind that, if you please, so don't waste your wit in trying to contrive it."

"Good heaven! have you really brought matters to such a pass as that, major?" said the unfortunate lady, her eyes flashing and her cheeks becoming redder than ever rouge made them. "What a return for all my enormous exertions for you! And such unequalled success, too! It is enough to drive one mad!"

"Not enough to drive such a woman as you are, mad, my charming Barnaby," said he, with a coaxing smile. "Besides, my dear, you have never yet asked how much this rather bold winning may amount to. If we get clear off with it, that may make some considerable difference, I promise you."

"What difference," said she, "can it make to me, sir, I should like to know? You have taken care to keep your winnings pretty snugly to yourself, you will please to remember; whereas I have been labouring, as you well know, to make the great and *honourable* celebrity I have obtained as advantageous to you as myself, and *this* is the return I get for it."

To do my heroine justice, she was not a weeping lady; but at this moment, and especially as she pronounced the word *honourable*, which not only set off with great effect the indiscreet proceedings of her spouse, but brought fresh upon her memory the delightful feelings with which she had listened to the demands for her autograph, at this moment tears certainly started to her eyes and she seemed determined to make the most of them, blowing her nose a good deal, and even producing at intervals something very like a sob.

Major Allen Barnaby had left his bed when this conversation began, and had been employing himself from the moment he had thrown on his dressing-gown in the necessary operation of shaving but upon observing the condition of his wife, and at the same time feeling the force of the words she had spoken, he laid aside the instrument which he was employing upon his chin, walked across the room to the spot where he had deposited the garments he had worn the night before, and extracting his pocket-book from the receptacle in which it was lodged, walked back again to the bed and laid it unopened on her pillow.

"There, my dear," he said, as he quietly renewed his shaving "there! you never had that little book in your hands before, to the best of my knowledge and belief; and now I recommend you to dry your handsome eyes, and look at it. It is just the first packet you will come to that you will find the most worthy of observation.

The mind of my admirable heroine was not formed to dissolve in watery woe at such a moment as this. She instantly sat up in bed, opened the pocket-book, and obeying exactly the instruction she had received, came upon a packet of exceedingly dirty paper among which, however, was one little scrap newly written upon and looking like a bit of first-rate letter paper. The dirty papers were, as the lady well knew, uncleanly thumbed bank-notes, and their whole amount was seven hundred and eighty dollars, but the scrap of letter-paper was worth them all put together, and a pretty considerable bit of money besides; being an order, payable in sight, upon a bank at Washington, and signed "Themistocle Joseph John Hapford," a name already well known to the attentive ears of Mrs. Allen Barnaby as that of a senator of first-rate standing, a very wealthy planter, and lastly, as one of the brilliant company who had been invited to meet them on the preceding day. The paper thus satisfactorily inscribed might, therefore, be fairly estimated at the value indicated by the figures it bore, which amounted to the pleasant sum of one thousand five hundred and fifty dollars. For a moment the countenance of Mrs. Allen Barnaby became radiant, but in the next it faded again, and she exclaimed, with a deep sigh—

"Yes, Donny, yes! This might atone for much! but what do you find the paper you got in Curzon-street worth?"

"I don't wonder it should come into your head, my dear

replied her husband: "but I am happy to say that we have a considerably better chance this time. I am sure, my dear, that I shall be as sorry as you can be to take you away from all the honour and renown that you are so cleverly making for yourself here, and indeed I shan't think of doing it, whatever I may be obliged to do myself, if upon reflection you prefer remaining behind. But the state of the case is this—I remember it all perfectly now that I have dipped my head in cold water, and set about recollecting a little—the state of the case is this, my Barnaby: the bank-notes that you find there, were lost between Colonel Beauchamp and his other playing friend, Judge Wilkins, who lives close by; but the draft came, as you see, from Mr. Hapford, who drove above fifteen miles to his own house after the table broke up; that I well remember, for there was a deal of talking about wanting him to stay. Well now, it strikes me, that the only safe thing for me to do, is to declare this morning that either you, or I, or Tornorino (Patty must know nothing about it)—but some one of us three must be taken ill with a terrible complaint that we have perhaps been long used to, and set off, without losing a moment, bag and baggage, to look for the best medical assistance. We may promise to come back again, you know, and so we can, if we like it; that is to say, if nothing comes of what passed last night, besides the quiet cashing of this neat check. Half of that whole sum of two thousand three hundred and thirty dollars I mean to present to you, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, for your own particular use and benefit, to make up to you for any inconvenience which this accident may have occasioned."

These last words were pronounced with a low bow, performed at the bottom of the bed, where the major stood wiping his razor upon the sleeve of his dressing-gown, while his eyes were fixed with a slight expression of anxiety upon the august countenance of his wife. He had, however, no longer anything to fear in that quarter; the noble generosity of purpose which he thus announced, not only stifled every sentiment of anger, but created an emotion of admiration which in her generous heart left room for no other.

"You may at times be thoughtless and indiscreet, my dear major," she replied, in a tone of deep feeling, "but there is a fund of just and honourable delicacy about you, sufficient to redeem a thousand such trifling errors. I accept your present as frankly as it is offered, and will not deny that it is as just as it is generous; for the blunder you have made has certainly stopped me short in a very glorious career. Not that I mean to abandon my project, observe. It is much too well imagined, and has in fact already been far too successful to be given up. However, we need not talk about that now; I shall be able to manage the bringing it forward again, I dare say. What we must think of now, my dear Donny, is how to get off with flying colours here: and that too, I dare say, I shall be able to manage; your generous conduct will inspire me

spirit to get through it all. But it is I who must be sick, Mr. I should not like, my dear, to see you undertake such a tiresome job. All you need do, is to be in a dreadful agony of grief about me, and insist upon having me removed to some of the great cities directly—you understand?"

"Oh yes! my dear, I understand most perfectly well, you may depend upon it, and the only improvement I suggest is, that whatever city we decide upon going to before we set out, we should hear of something as we go along that should make us change our minds and send us to another."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby looked grave.

"Indeed! Was the circumstance that occurred last night so—very much out of the common way?" said she.

Her husband laughed.

"Why, no, my dear," he replied, "I can't say that it was anything very extraordinary; but it is always impossible to say, you know, how a joke of that kind may be taken by strangers. Some people think a good deal of it, while others again treat it quite lightly. But we ought to be prepared for the worst. If I can but get that bit of paper honoured, however, I shall care very little what any of the folks in this nasty, frizzling, frying, burnt-up, egro-driving country, may think or feel on the subject. We have nothing to do but keep moving, my dear, and I have a notion that you and I, between us, may snap our fingers at the whole world."

"All I can say in return, major, is, that we must do our best," replied the lady, with an encouraging smile. "And now, my dear," she continued, "set off directly, catch hold of one of the blackmoors, and send in word to madam that you must beg to speak to her without delay. She won't keep you waiting, you may depend upon it, and when you see her, just look and speak as a devoted husband ought to do when he thinks himself in danger of losing the best of wives, and then send her to me, and you shall find everything beautifully arranged for our setting off in the twinkling of an eye."

"How many more times shall I have to tell you that you were born for me?" cried the major, suddenly saluting her with all the fervour of young affection; "though I can never hope to equal you anything," he added, "you shall see at least that your example is not altogether lost. If I do not enact the agonised husband with spirit, then never trust me again. But upon my soul, my Barnaby, I shall only have to fancy that the thing is real in order to be in a hurry for acting despair to perfection."

This tender assurance was received with a very charming smile, and then the fond husband tore himself away, to perform the part assigned him. This part, as it speedily appeared, was instantly acted by the alert major, and with undoubted success; for almost before Mrs. Allen Barnaby had time to arrange everything about her proper order for her own part of the drama, her door was

opened with a hurried and agitated hand, and Mrs. Beauchamp stood before her.

Short as the interval had been, however, Mrs. Allen Barnaby had found time to wash all traces of rouge from her cheeks, and the effect of this to one who had never seen her but in the fullest bloom, was really startling.

"Oh my!" exclaimed the terrified lady of the mansion, to whom the idea of yellow fever had immediately suggested itself,—*"oh my! you are sick, sure enough! My dear, dear lady, I'll send off to Euripedesville this very moment, for it is there that hides the smartest doctor we have. Only think of your being caught so, all of a minute! I'll come again in no time,"* she added, turning towards the door; *"but first, before everything, we must send for the doctor."* A low groan indicative of the very severest suffering, arrested her steps. *"Oh dear! oh dear! I do believe she's dying already,"* exclaimed the terrified Mrs. Beauchamp, wringing her hands, and then flying to the bell, she rang it violently.

"Come to me!" murmured the sufferer, *"oh come to me, my dearest friend, and let me speak one word to you."*

Delighted to find that so much strength was left, Mrs. Beauchamp hastened to obey her, but before she could reach the side of the bed where she lay, half-a-dozen woolly heads appeared at the door to answer the bell.

"Shall I tell the creturs to get you a hot bath, my dear?" said the kind hostess, hanging over her.

"No, no, no," groaned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, *"only send them away, and let me speak to you for one single moment alone."*

The wish was instantly obeyed, the slaves dismissed, the door closed, and Mrs. Beauchamp hanging over the bed to catch the slightest sound.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby now appeared to make a strong effort to enable herself to speak intelligibly, and then said, lowly and slowly, but with perfect distinctness—

"My friend, I am poisoned!"

Mrs. Beauchamp's only reply was a piercing shriek.

"Compose yourself, my dearest friend, compose yourself, I entreat you," resumed the invalid, *"let me be but prompt in what I have to say, and what I have to do, and I may yet be saved!"*

"Speak, then, speak, my dearest lady," returned poor Mrs. Beauchamp, with tears running down her cheeks, *"and I will obey you to the very smallest particular."*

On receiving this assurance, Mrs. Allen Barnaby raised herself by a great effort in her bed, in order to make what she was about to say more distinctly audible, and then, though occasionally interrupted by pangs which caused her to groan terribly, she said—

"Yes, my friend, it is but too certain that I am poisoned. Among the many studies to which I have given attention, the effect of poisons is one, and this enables me—oh-h-h!—to tell you with

the most perfect certainty that I am now suffering from the effect of some mineral poison administered about twelve or fourteen hours ago. That some revengeful slave, or slaves, have done this, I have not, in fact there cannot be, the slightest doubt. I am the victim of my principles. Nor shall I regret it, even if death overtakes me, provided I am assured you, my dear Mrs. Beauchamp, and those you most value and esteem—oh-h-h!—shall do me justice."

It is impossible to describe the agony of feeling into which these words threw poor Mrs. Beauchamp; but Mrs. Allen Barnaby suddenly checked all expression of it by saying, with all the energy of lingering hope—

"Then save me! Save me by instantly lending me a carriage and horses to convey me to a steamboat that shall take me with the least possible loss of time to New York. Fortunately I have an antidote, which indeed I have already taken, that will for many days so far check the action of the poison as to give me hope of life if I can reach that city; for somewhere amongst my effects, I have the address of a practitioner there who is greatly celebrated, even in London, for his skill in cases of poison. Will you do this for me, Mrs. Beauchamp, and without an hour's delay?"

"Will I?" exclaimed the good lady, running towards the door, "oh! what is there I would not do?" And she was out of sight in a moment.

The affectionate major, whose anxiety naturally kept him hovering at the threshold, entered the room as Mrs. Beauchamp quitted it, and carefully closing the door approached the bed, and directed an inquiring glance towards his wife.

"I am very bad indeed, my dear," she said, as her black eye twinkled laughingly up to his. "I am poisoned, major, please to observe that. I am poisoned by the wicked slaves who have found out my principles; so of course everything ought to be done that can be done to get me out of their way, and within reach of a certain learned man at New York, who I happen to know cures poisoned folks to a miracle."

"But, my dear," returned the major, looking very grave, "do you remember how many day's journey it is between this place and New York? How is it possible that you should survive till you get there?"

"How sweetly anxious you are for me!" returned his lady, tenderly. "But don't be alarmed, major. By the greatest good luck in the world I happen to have heard of an antidote which delays the action of poison in a most remarkable manner, and this antidote I have already taken, my love; so don't agitate yourself; but just tell me if you don't think this would be an excellent opportunity for us to get rid of those tiresome Perkinses? Patty and I are both of us as sick of them as possible. The truth is, you see, that everything is perfectly different from what we expected

I had no idea of our getting on as we have done, and as I have no doubt in the world that we shall do again, if we can contrive to get off before that senator man comes to look after you. But these lanky Perkinses are ten times more plague than profit, and I'd give anything to be fairly quit of them."

"That's very likely, I think; but I protest I don't very well see how you are to set about it," returned the major, drily.

"Leave that to me, my dear, I'll just have a try for it, at any rate. And now I think you had better get sight of Patty, and tell her that I am very ill. You may tell her the poison story, if you like it, only don't frighten her, poor thing. As to her Don——"

"Oh, as to her Don," interrupted the major, laughing, "you may depend upon it he will be exceedingly intelligent upon the subject."

"Pray don't laugh so very loud. Just fancy any one hearing you!" whispered his wife.

Major Allen Barnaby promised to be more discreet; and after a little further conversation concerning the necessary packing, and the best means of setting the Perkinses to do it, if they could be left behind without offending them, he departed.

It is unnecessary to follow every stage of the process by which the whole business was finally arranged; it will be sufficient to state that before noon, on the day following the great Big-Gang Bank dinner-party, Mrs. Major Allen Barnaby was laid, amidst an inconceivable number of pillows and cushions at the bottom of a Deerborn, with her adoring husband sitting beside her, to watch every movement, and administer every attention, as it drove gently along towards the place at which they hoped to meet a steamboat; while Patty and her Don followed in another carriage, having "another still" behind them, conveying their baggage. A very few words had settled the Perkins question most satisfactorily to all parties.

Mrs. Beauchamp rejoiced with no common joy at the idea of still retaining near her a fraction of the enlightened English party whose introduction to her friends had been attended with so much *éclat*; and the Miss Perkinses were by no means sorry for the transfer, being, to say the truth, rather tired of the patronage under which they had left their native land. Not to mention that the worthy Louisa began to suspect, from the various conversations which she had held with her friend Annie, that, even in a pecuniary point of view, they might manage a good deal better without them. Fortunately, this gentle-hearted lady, though rather more than sufficiently yielding in some particulars, never suffered anybody to interfere with her money matters. She had very snugly made all her own little arrangements of this kind before setting out, without any other assistance than that of the banker, whom she found was the proper person to employ upon the occasion, and she knew to a fraction how much, to a day when, and to a street and a number

where, she might reckon upon her resources. The parting, however, though not regretted, was exceedingly affectionate, and many were the assurances exchanged that they should meet again, somewhere or other, very soon.

It would be difficult to say why it was that neither of the Miss Perkinses believed one single word about Mrs. Allen Barnaby's sudden indisposition; but such was the fact, though they hinted not this scepticism to any human being, save each other. Perhaps Miss Louisa might retain in her memory a sufficient number of by-gone make-believes, to generate doubts upon the present occasion; and perhaps the sympathising Miss Matilda might discover something life-like, and even healthy, in the anxiety expressed by her dear friend, whenever Mrs. Beauchamp left her side, concerning the safety of such of her suits as had been unpacked since their arrival at "the Bank." Whatever the cause, the fact was as I have said; neither of the sisters gave faith to her statement concerning her dreadful sufferings; and I mention this in justice to the spinsters, who, notwithstanding their various little peculiarities, were not so hard-hearted as to have seen any lady of their acquaintance poisoned, and packed up, in so very alarming a state, without feeling much greater concern for her condition than they now did for that of Mrs. Allen Barnaby. They were both of them too wise, however, as I have before stated, to hint their suspicions to the amiable lady who cherished them both so kindly (and so very conveniently) for no reason in the world but because they were Mrs. Allen Barnaby's *attachées*.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BEFORE I follow my heroine in her further progress, I must say a few words concerning some of the personages she had left behind her. For the Miss Perkinses the reader need have no anxieties for several months to come. The noble emotions of admiration and gratitude to which Mrs. Allen Barnaby's efforts in favour of the slave system had given rise, were not of a nature to fade away hastily; for all the strongest passions of the planter race were roused in the cause, and it was impossible to mention her name without producing among them an universal murmur of affectionate applause. So deep, and so sincere was this feeling, that many of the families who had been looking forward to a visit from the enlightened traveller, were but too happy to soothe their disappointment at not seeing her, by obtaining a visit from her dear friends and travelling companions of sufficient duration to permit their being shown and exhibited in all directions; in proof that *their hosts, for the time being, were really and truly among th*

N

happy few who were personally acquainted with the illustrious lady.

During the whole of this vicarial ovation, the two sisters were, in their different ways, exceedingly happy. Miss Louisa, it is true, never saw any other American young lady that she admired quite as much as Annie; but her spirits were sustained in a most delightful state, made up of brilliant hopes and comfortable certainties. She was feasted, waited upon, and in all respects treated with the highest consideration, while her little purse scarcely became lighter by a single cent.

This was a sober certainty: while her hopes were sustained by watching day by day the prodigious politeness of the American bachelors to her sister, which she would not suffer herself to doubt, must, in time, come to something. And as for Miss Matilda herself, she lived in a state of continual ecstasy. She was handed about by the elbow wherever she moved; nobody ever seemed to forget that she was in the room; the ladies taught her how to arrange a "spit-curl," so as to defy the moistifying effects of the climate and the season; and in every drawing-room she entered, the very first and best of the gentlemen, single as well as married, seemed to take a pride in showing how greatly they admired her.

We will leave our old acquaintances in this happy condition, and turn to take a glance at poor Annie Beauchamp. All the joy that the departure of Mrs. Allen Barnaby and Co. might have given her, under other circumstances, was merged and forgotten in the deeper interest of a scene which occurred immediately afterwards.

Frederic Egerton had, as I before mentioned, again been induced to watch the peculiar manner in which the dark-eyed, silent son-in-law of Major Allen Barnaby seemed to float round and round the card-table at which his father-in-law was engaged. Had he never observed it before, the circumstance might not so completely have awakened his attention now; but his observation being stimulated by the suspicion he had previously conceived, he very soon became convinced that the father and son were in league together, and that the former did not play fairly.

Having, at length, fully made up his mind on this point, he retired to bed. Had there been no such being as Annie Beauchamp in existence, it may be doubted whether the young Englishman would have thought himself called upon to interfere in so very delicate a business, especially as he had no power of bringing forward any positive proof on the subject; but the idea of suffering the father of one who was becoming every hour more closely interwoven with all his future hopes to suffer wrong, to permit, in short, the father of Annie to be cheated and betrayed by a travelling swindler, and that swindler an Englishman, was intolerable; and, after long cogitation with himself, he at length dropped asleep, with the determination of mentioning the circumstances to Anne

himself, and leaving the future management of the affair to her discretion.

It was very late when Egerton went to sleep, and it was not very early when he woke; but, upon summoning a slave and inquiring whether the family had breakfasted, he was told that the house was in great confusion on account of the English biggest lady being taken ill, and like to die. He then ventured to inquire for Miss Beauchamp, and was informed that she had not yet left her room.

Vexed and harassed with the uncertainty of what he ought to do in this new state of things, he entered the usual breakfast-room, and, finding it entirely unoccupied, though there were symptoms of several persons having breakfasted there, he sat down alone, broke his fast upon what he found, and then rambled out upon the lawn, determined to occupy the interval till the next hour of family meeting as he could, and then to be guided as to what he ought to do by the position of the parties who should then assemble. If he should find that the illustrious authoress was really at the point of death, he generously made up his mind to let her die in peace; but in case it proved, as he strongly suspected, that the slave he had questioned had talked about that of which he knew nothing, he was equally determined, by some means or other, to put the family upon their guard.

In pursuance of this intention he strolled away into the rice grounds, his curiosity to see the cultivation of a crop so new to him, making him for an hour or so forget the fatigue which the intense heat produced. He questioned several of the slaves, but found them uniformly unwilling to converse; a sort of sullen reserve which equally surprised and disgusted him, till he was enabled to judge the cause of it more fairly by the finesse of a negro youth, who, while he was attempting to elicit some local information from the man next him, said in a low but very distinct voice, and without for an instant intermitting his labour or changing his attitude—
"Massa besser no talk nigger slave. White looker watch."

Thus put on his guard, he took care to give no immediate indication than he had been thus warned, and moved on with an air of idle indifference; but ere he had taken many steps, he was enabled to comprehend the necessity of the warning by perceiving that there was indeed a white looker on the watch; for a fellow of that complexion, but with a scowl as black as night, was following his movements from behind the shelter of a palmetto bush.

Rendered cautious for the sake of the poor negroes by this discovery, Mr. Egerton determined to pursue his study of statistics in this direction no further, and immediately returned to the house. In the usual *keeping*-room he found the eldest Miss Perkins seated alone in expectation of the arrival of her friend Annie, who had promised to lead her to some retreat in the grounds that had *the reputation of being first-rate cool.*

Egerton immediately desired her to inform him if it were true that Mrs. Allen Barnaby was dangerously ill. Miss Louisa simp-
pered a little, and replied—

“Oh dear, sir, I hope not.”

“I wonder, then, what the black meant who told me that all the house was in confusion, and the biggest of the lady visitors at the point of death.”

Miss Louisa laughed outright, for she never felt at all afraid of Mr. Egerton, and she was greatly amused at the phrase used to describe her illustrious friend.

“You must not accuse the poor black of meaning to tell stories either, Mr. Egerton,” said she; “and, indeed, what he said was strictly true, as far as the confusion of the house goes, for most certainly the confusion *was* very great; however, it is all over now, and Major and Mrs. Allen Barnaby, their daughter, and son-in-law, are all set off for New York.”

“All set off for New York?” repeated Egerton, in an accent that seemed rather to puzzle Miss Louisa.

“I suppose you are very much surprised, are you not, sir, at hearing they are all gone, and we left here? I am sure it seems to me quite like a dream.”

“I am not very greatly surprised that Major Allen Barnaby should have taken himself off,” replied the young man; “but I am very glad,” he added, with a friendly smile, “that you are left behind.”

“That is very kind of you,” said the grateful spinster; looking up in his face, however, as if she wished him to say a little more on the subject. “But I wonder you are not a little more surprised, sir.”

“My good lady,” he replied, “will you tell me if you and your sister have any intention of joining them again?”

“Oh dear, yes, I suppose so,” she answered; but added, after a moment’s reflection, “not that anything was exactly settled as to the time; but they all seemed to talk as if they should see us again soon.”

“I hope, Miss Perkins,” said Egerton, earnestly, “that you will never see them again. I have every reason to believe that the major, as he calls himself is little better than a common swindler and cheat; and I am quite persuaded that you and your sister must have been greatly deceived, or you would not have travelled in his company.”

These words came like a thunderbolt upon poor Miss Perkins, and her distress and astonishment were so great, that her good-natured countryman entered more fully into the subject with her than he had intended, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that his good counsel was not thrown away, but that she was very stoutly determined never to renew the intercourse thus fortunately broken off between them. Her gratitude to him was equally great and

sincere, and the simple but earnest expression of it so plainly bore the impress of truth, that the somewhat incongruous seeming friendship between them became closer than ever, and he ventured to speak to her of Annie, not exactly as a confidant, indeed, but with more freedom than he would have used with any other individual in the family.

He told her that as the English party invited by Colonel Beachamp must now be considered as broken up, he should himself take leave almost immediately, but that he should be sorry to do so without finding an opportunity of saying farewell to her young friend and favourite, Miss Beauchamp.

"I hope," he added, "that the indisposition she complained of yesterday is not serious, but it effectually prevented my speaking to her all day; nor have I been fortunate enough to see her at all this morning."

Miss Perkins shook her head mournfully in reply, but did not answer him in words.

"You do not think her seriously ill, Miss Perkins?" said the young man, changing colour.

"No, sir, no; I don't, indeed," said the kind soul, endeavouring, *sans façon*, to soothe the anxiety she saw he was feeling. "It is not her health, sir, that makes me uneasy about her, but I don't think she is happy."

"What do you suppose makes her otherwise, Miss Perkins?" said he, with a degree of emotion which he had no power to conceal.

"Why, it puzzles me, sir. I never did see any girl exactly like this American young lady, and that's the reason, perhaps, that I don't quite understand why she is unhappy. She is so sweetly kind, that when we are talking together she always seems gay and cheerful; but I think that is only to give me pleasure, for I never come upon her unawares—that is of late, I mean—that I don't see the tears in her eyes."

"Is it not possible," said Egerton, "that she may have seen reason to disapprove the great intimacy her mother has been forming in so absurd a manner with those Barnaby people?"

"I don't believe she likes it," replied Miss Louisa, musingly, and as if recalling things that had passed.

"Then she shall never be exposed to it again," he eagerly replied. "But, perhaps, there is no chance of their ever meeting again?"

On this point, however, Miss Perkins immediately set him right, repeating many of the affectionate phrases on both sides which predicted future intercourse and continued intimacy. On hearing this, Egerton immediately decided upon communicating his observations to his hospitable entertainers; a communication which he would certainly rather have avoided, but which, from what he now heard, appeared to be a positive duty.

A few minutes after this resolution was taken, a favourable opportunity arrived for putting it in practice, the colonel and his lady, their daughter and Miss Matilda, all entering the room together.

"Oh, here you are," said Mrs. Beauchamp, "we have been looking for you that we might go all together to the spring-house. I have had it all got ready for you, with flowers, and the nigger-girls churning, and everything. I am so sorry that my dear, darling Mrs. Allen Barnaby, didn't see it before she went. But I pray to God we shall soon have her back again."

Upon this hint he spoke, and quietly and concisely gave his hearers to understand that accident had discovered to him some particulars in the conduct of the person calling himself Major Allen Barnaby, which made it his duty to caution them against any further intercourse with him or his family. It is impossible to describe the vehemence of rage and anger with which this statement was listened to by Mrs. Beauchamp.

"You are a false slanderer, sir!" she exclaimed, as soon as she found breath to speak; "and happily for the peace and happiness, and perhaps the lives of me and mine, I am capable of proving my words against you, in a different sort of manner, I expect, from what you can pretend to offer in defence of your most wicked falsehoods. It isn't ten minutes ago, colonel," she continued, with vehement gesticulation, and a degree of anger that seemed to make it difficult for her to articulate, "no, not ten minutes ago, that I met Tomkins in the passage leading to your room. I asked him what he wanted, and he said he only wished to tell you that one of your company, describing him"—and here the angry lady pointed at Mr. Egerton—"he only wanted to tell you that this young traitor had been seen this very morning talking and cajoling with the slaves, and that he thought it had better be looked to. And how did I answer him? I told him he was a fool, and didn't know what he was talking about, so perfect was my confidence in his honour. But now see if the words of Tomkins are not proved to the very letter? Who is there can doubt, I should like to know, this wicked young man's motive for trying to make mischief between me and my dearest friends? He is an abolitionist. Let him deny it if he can. He is come here, I'll bet my life, to raise a rebellion amongst the slaves; and not content with that, just see the vengeance with which he falls upon the excellent people who have now left us, for the alone reason that they would be likely to stop his wicked plottings if they could. And now, who is there will take upon them to say that it wasn't himself, and no other, that contrived to get the dose that threatens the life of our invaluable friend? It is not my business, but yours, Colonel Beauchamp; but as I live and breathe, I would have him taken up and sent to prison on suspicion."

Here the indignant lady stopped, and it would be difficult to say which of her audience felt the most astonished at her attack.

It required a minute or two for the colonel to recover himself sufficiently to speak; but when he did, it was in terms scarcely less vehement than those used by his wife.

The fact of Egerton's having been seen in conversation with his slaves, was in the eyes of both almost the deepest crime he could commit, as it would have been, probably, in those of nearly every other proprietor in the state; for the jealousy on this subject amounts to a passion as vehement as that of Othello himself. Nevertheless, the prudent colonel did not appear to approve the scheme of sending the offender to prison, although he entertained no doubt whatever that his lady's conjecture was perfectly correct as to the cause of the imputation thrown on the character of Major Allen Barnaby. He had been himself exceedingly tipsy the night before, and all he recollected or knew as to the result of the long hours of high play in which he and his friends had indulged, was that he had discovered himself in the morning to have been the winner of twenty dollars. To him, therefore, it appeared quite evident that nothing but malice could have dictated the statement they had heard, and accordingly he scrupled not to say as much, adding that the object of the slander being as evident as the slander itself, the sooner the utterer of it was out of his house and off his premises the better.

For half a moment Egerton stood silent, as if uncertain what he should reply, and in that half moment he caught sight of Annie, who was standing at the other end of the room, her cheeks and lips as colourless as marble, and with both her hands resting upon the back of a chair, as if to prevent herself from falling. A wild thought of flying towards her, of proclaiming his love, and rebutting the charge brought against him, rushed through his brain; but soberer thoughts succeeded, and a more dignified line of conduct suggested itself.

"Colonel Beauchamp," he said, "there is no chance at this moment that my telling you I am wholly innocent of the charge brought against me, should be listened to either by yourself or your lady; and therefore I shall abstain from all protestation on the subject. I beg to thank you for your obliging hospitality, and to assure you that I shall remember that, when your very idle suspicions against me shall be forgotten. As I have no servant with me, I must beg permission to enter the room I have occupied for a few moments, that I may throw my things together preparatory to their removal. Farewell."

Having spoken these words, the young man took his leave of Miss Matilda Perkins by a very civil bow, and then passing on to her sister, who was standing at no great distance from Annie, he took her hand, and said in a tone that could be distinctly heard by none but herself—

"Miss Perkins, I feel convinced that I have not lost your esteem, and therefore I venture to ask a favour of you on which the happ

ness of my life depends. Will you contrive this evening to bring your young friend, Miss Beauchamp, to the house we all visited together on Tuesday last, and at the same hour?"

These words were uttered very rapidly, and he looked to the good lady's eyes, rather than her lips, for the reply. It was given with equal caution and kindness, and with one mere glance at the trembling Annie, he left the room. The result of this rendezvous must be told hereafter; for it is now absolutely necessary that we should look after the fortunes of my heroine.

CHAPTER XXX.

ON reaching the little village of Shakspeare Town, at which it was the purpose of Major Allen Barnaby to embark, he had the considerable satisfaction of hearing that no steamer for New York was expected to stop there for a day or two; he therefore dismissed the conveyances so zealously lent for the use of his beloved and suffering wife and her family; wrote a few affectionate lines to Mrs. Beauchamp, stating, that though violent spasms had returned on the road, the precious object of his care was again so far relieved as to encourage the delightful hope that the final result would be favourable; and then shut himself up with his suffering angel at the hotel, reiterating very audible orders on all sides, that notice should be given them at whatever hour of the day or night a steamer bound for New York direct, should reach the station.

During the extremely comfortable little *tête-à-tête* supper which followed (for the negro attendants and their horses were to repose for that night at Shakspeare Town, which rendered it necessary that the every-way interesting invalid should confine herself to her chamber), a discussion arose between the major and his wife as to the necessity of keeping Patty in the dark respecting the real state of the case. The major was of opinion that it would be better for her morality that she should continue to live in ignorance of his peculiar mode of playing cards, as well as the extraordinary facility with which her mother could seem the thing she was not; but Mrs. Allen Barnaby did not altogether agree with him.

"As to her knowing no more than you choose to tell her, Donny, about your rules of play, I have no objection; though, after all, you know, her ignorance or innocence, as you call it, must depend altogether on her husband. He's up to everything, and if he should choose to live on the same pleasant confidential terms with his wife as you do with me, Donny, I don't see how we can interfere to prevent it. But Patty's no fool, and not a bit more likely to make a fuss about nothing than her mother was before

her. But with all this we have nothing to do; and for you, my dear, you may just tell or not tell, as much as you like. But for my own part of the business, I have made up my mind, as I always have done throughout my whole life, to act in strict conformity to my principles, and nobody in my opinion can be in any degree worthy of esteem who does otherwise. I have always endeavoured, my dear major, to impress on the mind of our daughter, that it is a woman's duty to sacrifice everything for the interest of her husband; and as far as I am concerned, I shall merely tell Patty that you had had enough of Big-Gang Bank, and requested me to facilitate your departure in any manner I could devise—and of course, I shall add, that in conformity to the unvarying line of conduct which I marked out for myself from the first hour of my becoming a wife, I instantly feigned illness, as being at once the most prompt and the most effectual mode of complying with your wishes."

"Well, my dear, that is all very right and proper," replied the major; "and no man, I am sure, could find in his heart to say a word against it. But suppose she should take it into *her* head, wife, to ask what it was that put it into *my* head to be in such a monstrous hurry to get off, what should you tell her? I do love the girl, and I don't want her to think me worse than I am; and upon my honour and life, my dear, what happened the other night, the accident I mean upon which the luck turned, was just exactly nothing. So I think, if you please, that if she should take a fancy for questioning you, the best thing to do will be just to refer her to me; saying, you know, in your own charming manner, which I am sure gives the finest example that ever girl had, that it was enough for you to know that I wanted to be off, and that you didn't care three farthings, or something like that, you understand, whether you went or whether you stayed, provided I was pleased. And then, if she wants to know more, of course she will come to me—and I don't much fear but what I shall find something or other to tell her that will set her mind at rest."

This point being satisfactorily adjusted, the truly conjugal couple retired to rest; and when the major sallied forth the next morning, he had the satisfaction of finding his black *cortège* all ready to depart, and only waiting to receive the very latest account respecting the health of the "missis."

This was given in such a manner, as while it sustained hope, left no room for surprise at the too prompt recovery of the assassinated authoress—and then the carriages and their guard of honour retreated, leaving the major and his charming helpmate at liberty to rejoice at their ease at the perfect success of a stratagem which had enabled them to escape from an embarrassment that might have proved not a little perplexing.

"Now for it," exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as she watched from her bedroom window the last of the three vehicles disappear.

ing behind the trees, "now, my dear, let us look after Patty, and settle all together what we had better do next."

"We will settle, my dear," replied her polite husband, "as soon as you please; but as to our doing it *all together*, I see no need of that. Neither the Don nor his lady, as I take it, will make any objection to follow, let us move which way we will."

"I am decidedly for Philadelphia," said the lady.

"And I, with grief I confess it, am decidedly against it," responded the gentleman; "but I will give you an excellent reason for it. There is no high play at Philadelphia."

"And that is precisely the excellent reason for which you ought to go there," rejoined Mrs. Allen Barnaby. "Why was it, if you please, that we made such a forced march from our snug quarters at the Beauchamps'? And why did I consent to lie for the best part of two days like a sick dog in a basket? Wasn't it wholly and solely for the purpose of your removing yourself, my good Mr. Major, from the place where a certain Mr. Themistocles Joseph John Hapford (you see I have not forgotten the precious name to which I am to owe my darling dollars) was likely to find you? And where, I should like to know, would he be so little apt to look for you as in a city where there is no high play going on?"

"I hope I shall never be such a fool, wife, as to fix downright upon anything without first taking your judgment upon it," said the major, with energy. "You most decidedly are what our admirable friends have called first-rate. Philadelphia, then, let it be. I'll go and mystify Patty a little; but I think I shall only say I was tired, and got you for fun to play sick, because I wanted to be off. There is no need to frighten her, you know, and make her fancy that every bush she sees is a constable running after me."

"But stop one minute," returned his wife. "Just tell me before you go, whether you mean to take what the ladies here call 'a spell of boarding,' or whether you shall prefer going into private lodgings?"

"As you will, my dear," replied the major, who certainly became more and more convinced every day of his life that his wife was one of the cleverest women in the world. "I really had much rather that you should settle that point yourself."

"Then we will board, major," she replied, with her usual decision of purpose. "As we are absolutely without letters or introductions of any kind, it is necessary now, as it was at first, that we should get where setting ourselves off a little will turn to account."

The major kissed his hand to her and walked off, saying, as he went—

"*Bravissimo!* You are the best trump, my dear, that ever fell to my share. And now I'll go and do what is needful with our Patty, and then give orders that notice shall be given us when the first steamer for Philadelphia arrives."

Nothing could be more prosperous than the little voyage which, partly by river, and partly by sea, brought my heroine and her amiable family to Philadelphia. They had made themselves sufficiently agreeable on board the steamboat to have obtained a good deal of useful local information in return for the answers they had thought proper to give in the national cross-examination to which, as a matter of course, they had been subjected during the voyage. The name, and all other particulars relative to the most fashionable boarding-house in the city, made part of this, and they immediately made use of it, by ordering their baggage to be conveyed at once to No. —, Chesnut-street, following themselves on foot.

On inquiring for the Mrs. Simcoe, whom they had been instructed to ask for, as the head of the establishment, they were ushered through an exquisitely neat hall to a large handsome parlour at the back of the house. At the moment they entered, it was unoccupied, save by the glossy furniture which shone with all the brightness that horse-hair and mahogany can show, when not a single particle of dust is permitted to tarnish its brilliance.

"It's a clean place, at any rate," observed the major.

"But the sofa is not half so soft and comfortable as those at New Orleans, or at the Beauchamps' either," exclaimed Patty, very nearly getting a fall, by sliding off the firmly-stuffed, and treacherously-sloping imitation of a couch, upon which she had thrown herself at full length with her usual vivacity.

"I can't say I overmuch like the style of it," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby; "the things all look as if they were set out more for show than use."

The Don said nothing, but he took the liberty of looking about him, and his pale yellow nose assumed an attitude between his black mustaches which expressed sufficiently well a feeling of distaste and discomfort.

But ere another word could be uttered by any of them, the door was opened, and a lady appeared at it, whose aspect must have had something in it calculated to inspire respect, for Patty actually put her legs off the sofa and sat upright. The person who inspired this unusual sensation in the breast of the lively bride, was a quaker lady, of about forty years of age, with a countenance as beautiful as very small features of exquisite regularity, and a complexion as delicate in its pink and white as the blossom of the eglantine could make it. Her dress was perfect in its kind, being composed of fawn-coloured silk and snowy lawn of the best quality, and arranged with such exceeding neatness, that one might have fancied a quaker fairy had been her tire-woman, so guiltless of the contamination of human fingers did she look. She bent her pretty little head four times successively, while her light blue eyes, which shone with a sort of gentle moonlight gleam from beneath the smooth bands of her flaxen hair, were directed in turn to each of the party.

"We have been recommended to this house for boarding," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, in a tone a little less peremptory than was usual with her.

"May I ask who it was that sent thee?" demanded the gentle quaker.

"Upon my word, ma'am, I don't know the name of the gentleman," replied my heroine, a little offended, perhaps, at the doubt, or the caution, which the question seemed to indicate. "But perhaps you may know the name of Colonel Beauchamp? We have been staying with him and his lady for a long visit, and if you know anything about them, that must be quite recommendation enough, I suppose."

"No doubt of it, friend, if I chanced to know them, but I do not; and thee canst understand that this makes all the difference," replied Mrs. Simcoe, in a voice, the bland tones of which seemed greatly less suited to express doubt than welcome.

"Well, ma'am, there are people enough to take dollars when they're offered, without our wasting our time to find out whether you know our friends or not. I think we had better go somewhere else, major," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, looking exceedingly indignant.

"What must we do with the baggage, Mrs. Simcoe?" said a white help, opening the door, and presenting a face and figure as unlike those of her mistress as possible. "What rooms are the porters to carry it into?"

This appeal caused Mrs. Simcoe to look forth into the hall, and it may be that the sight of the abundant packages assembled there, suggested the idea that the lady's boast of being well furnished with dollars had something better to support it than any acquaintance, however intimate, with all the colonels in the Union; and having gently said to her handmaiden, "Thee bide a bit," she returned into the parlour, and addressing, like all other Americans when doing business, the principal gentleman of the party, instead of the principal lady, she said—

"Thee art welcome to remain here for a spell, if such be thy wish, friend. My terms are eight dollars a week for each person, provided they occupy the best rooms; six if they take the second best; and five if they content themselves with the third."

The bargain was soon made, and the party established under the very respectable roof of Mrs. Simcoe, at the rate of six dollars a week for each of them.

Having seen the various trunks and boxes disposed of in her own room, and in that of her daughter, Mrs. Allen Barnaby seated herself in a commodious arm-chair, and began to meditate upon their new position, and the mode in which her genius might be now best employed for the benefit of herself and family. The major had walked out into the town, to find which were the most frequented coffee-houses, and to pick up whatever intelligence he might be able to meet floating about; the Don was gone with him, and Patty had proclaimed her intention of lying down on the bed till dinner-time; so that the speculations of my heroine were not

She soon found, however, that she wanted a *carte du pays*, and at there could be little profit in devising schemes, while the circumstances and peculiarities of those to be acted upon remained unknown to her. Mrs. Allen Barnaby was probably not the first person who, when wishing for a precise knowledge of men and things, has had recourse to servants for assistance. Having puzzled herself for a minute or two as to the best means of finding out what sort of people they were got amongst, she suddenly started up and rang the bell. It was not answered by the white "help" whom she had already seen, but by an exceedingly well-dressed negress, having the steady aspect of an old and respectable servant.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "I thought there were no blacks here."

"As servants, ma'am, there are more blacks than whites," replied the woman.

"Do step in for a moment and shut the door," said the lady, in an accent of familiar kindness. "Tell me what is your name, will you?"

"My name is Ariadne, ma'am," said the negress, demurely.

"Bless me! what a fine name! But I wish, Ariadne, you could just tell me something about the company you have got in the house, and about yourselves too. I am quite glad to find blacks gain here, for then I suppose there will be no occasion to change—I mean to say that the people think much the same here as elsewhere about it. How many slaves has Mrs. Simcoe got?"

"Slaves, ma'am?" said Ariadne, while a considerable portion of anger flashed from her eyes. "The Philadelphia folks know better than that, thank God! We have got no slaves here."

"Dear me, how very odd, I thought all black people were slaves?" said the puzzled traveller.

"You will know better than that, ma'am, when you have been a little longer in a free state," replied the woman, frowning. "I am as free as Mrs. Simcoe herself, ma'am, and so are all the rest of us," added the offended negress, moving towards the door.

"Don't go away in a huff like that—I'm sure I didn't mean to offend you, my good woman," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, coaxingly. "You must remember, Ariadne, that I am just come from Carolina, and that I never heard there of any blacks that were not slaves. So don't let's quarrel about that, but just tell me a little about the ladies and gentlemen that are boarding here. Have they none of them got any slaves or plantations?"

"No, ma'am," said the woman, sternly; "they'd scorn such wickedness, one and all of them."

"Well! to be sure, that is queer, after all I have heard—and in the very same identical country too! If that isn't enough to puzzle the traveller, I wonder what is?" returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, adding in a mutter, "When at Rome we must do as the Romans do, I suppose, and so I must pitch my voice for singing another tune."

She then proceeded with a good deal of her usual cleverness to examine and cross-examine the woman, till she had made out, pretty tolerably to her satisfaction, what style and order of people composed the party at the boarding-table, at which they were about to take their places; and having learned all she could on the subject, she dismissed the negress, first presenting her with a "levy" in token of her gratitude. She then sought her daughter's apartment, which was at no great distance from her own.

Patty was lying on the bed fast asleep; but as time pressed, Mrs. Allen Barnaby could not yield to her maternal tenderness, by permitting her to sleep on, but felt absolutely compelled to arouse her to the necessary duty of dressing for dinner. Patty grumbled and scolded, and, indeed, scrupled not to tell her attentive mamma that she was a great brute for waking her; but no such trifles as this could move the steadfast spirit of her high-minded parent.

"Don't lay there abusing me, there's a darling, but wake up this very minute, and dress yourself," was her reply. "And mind, Patty," she added, "that you dress yourself very carefully and very decently, if you please. Don't put on that fine showy low dress that you wore the other day, with the blue and pink bows, because I happen to know perfectly well that it won't do here. I shouldn't wonder, I can tell you, if we should be turned out of the house in no time."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied the lately married lady; "I shall wear exactly what I like best, I promise you, ma'am, so you had better not bother me with any more such vagaries. I shall certainly desire Tornorino to bid you hold your tongue, if you do."

"Tornorino may chance to have the worst of it, my darling," returned her mother with the utmost good-humour; "so good-by, dearest, and wear your dark-green gown, and a high collar, there's a love."

With these words Mrs. Allen Barnaby retreated, leaving her daughter not only very angry, but very much puzzled. Her Don had already been throwing out hints respecting the probability that her respectable papa might get into a scrape or two, if he did not mind what he was about, and had also declared that he should not be at all surprised if it ended by their being obliged to shift for themselves, and that he would not mind setting about it to-morrow, if they could only screw a few hundred dollars out of the old folks. To all of which Madams Tornorino had paid very little attention, supposing it the result of some trifling dispute or other that no ways concerned either her own comfort or her own interest. But now that she heard her mother talk of their "being turned out of the house in no time," she fancied these different warnings alluded to one and the same thing, but what that might be she was totally at a loss to conjecture.

Upon the return of her husband she told him of her mother's queer ways, and insisted in a manner, somewhat peevish, that

he should tell her the short and the long of it at once, for that she was determined she *would* know what they all meant.

The Don shrugged his shoulders, and did not seem disposed to reply with the readiness that was evidently expected from him. He had, in fact, been very strictly charged by his father-in-law to say nothing to Patty upon the *accident* which had occurred at Big-*yang* Bank, and he had tolerably well obeyed the injunction; but he Don hated difficulties of all kinds, and he was beginning to doubt whether it were worth his while to run the risk of being taken up as a suspected character every time the major played, with no better payment than being boarded and lodged.

It was now, however, very nearly the hour at which Mrs. Simcoe had informed them she punctually dined, and this was too sacred a ceremony, in the opinion of Don Tornorino, for it to be broken into by any discussion whatever; he accordingly gave his air bride to understand that whatever information it was in his power to communicate, must be postponed to a future opportunity, and she had therefore, *bon gré, mal gré*, to descend to the dining-room very completely mystified as to what her respected parents were about. The major, who also felt that he had barely time enough to make his toilet, postponed all questionings of his wife for the moment, merely finding time to tell her that he had negotiated Mr. Hapford's bill without any difficulty, and the family accordingly sat down to table together, with considerably less unity of purpose than was usual with them.

The large, and neatly served dinner-table of Mrs. Simcoe was surrounded, exclusive of our travellers and her gentle self, by six American gentlemen and their six wives. They were all of them, at least, according to the opinion of Mrs. Allen Barnaby and her laughter, dressed more or less in the Quaker costume; the ladies being all habited with more attention to delicacy and neatness than either to fashion or splendour, and the gentlemen having little or no mixture of the chain and pin species of decoration, which usually distinguishes their countrymen.

The dress of Mrs. Allen Barnaby herself was also a model of propriety. The slight and floating drapery usually worn upon her ample shoulders was exchanged for a close fitting, white satin cape, rimmed with swan's down, which, though it caused her to endure sensations not very far removed from suffocation, made her feel herself, as she told the major afterwards, quite of a piece with all the rest of them, and much more likely to make her way among his straitlaced part of the population, than if she had made herself "fit to be seen," in the ordinary manner. This "making herself fit to be seen," by the way, was a phrase which, both in her laughter's vocabulary and her own, appeared to signify the exposing as much of their persons to view as could be conveniently managed by any possible arrangement of the sleeves and corsage; *from which it may be inferred that they interpreted fit to be seen,*

into *ready* to be seen, a gloss accepted, as it should seem, by many of their fair countrywomen, especially when preparing themselves for the dinner-table.

But whatever variations in *fitness* the fine judgment of my heroine might dictate, and adopt, according to circumstances, no shadow of changing in this matter was perceptible in the toilet of her young daughter; who came blazing into Mrs. Simcoe's dining-room precisely in the dress which her thoughtful mamma had requested her not to wear, and with such a remarkable deficiency of drapery about her shoulders, that the gentle lady at the head of the table had a sore struggle with herself as to whether she should or should not send for a certain mouse-coloured shawl from the next room to supply what was so evidently wanted. How this combat between meekness of spirit and severity of decorum might have ended, if nothing had occurred to interrupt it, I cannot say; but the usually silent business of eating and drinking had not advanced far, ere Mrs. Allen Barnaby bethought herself that, however foreign to the manners of the country conversation at the dinner-table might be, it was, nevertheless, her only chance at present for displaying those powers of mind upon which she rested her best hopes for continued success in the land to which fate and fortune had guided her steps. Having meditated for a moment or two as to how she should begin, she said to a mild-looking quaker gentleman on her right—

"May I ask you, sir, to be kind enough to tell me the name of the lady opposite to me?"

"Sarah Tomkins," was the concise reply; which certainly offered as little opportunity for continuing the conversation as any reply could do.

But Mrs. Allen Barnaby would never have been my heroine if such a difficulty as this could have checked her; it did *not* check her for a single moment, for she instantly replied—

"That is not the name I expected; for I fancied I had seen the lady before, and that she was called Morrice. It is a most extraordinary likeness, certainly. How odd it is, sir, isn't it, that sort of unaccountable resemblance that one sometimes sees between people in no way related to one another? For if that lady is not Mrs. Morrice herself, I don't think there is any chance of her being her sister, or cousin, or anything of that sort; because Mrs. Morrice's family are altogether English, and have never any of them emigrated to this country; and so much the worse for them, isn't it, sir? There never was such a glorious country as this, and that is what I have said to my husband, Major Allen Barnaby, every day since we have been here. Not, indeed, that he is in the least degree inclined to differ with me on the subject; he admires the country, and the charming people too, with exactly the same enthusiasm as I do. That is the major, sir, a little lower down on the other side, with full gray whiskers. A dear, excellent good

man he is, and so fond of what he calls the elegant peacefulness of this population, that if it was not for the rank he holds in the English army (and when he goes back he *must* be constantly with the Duke of Wellington again)—if it was not for this, he says he would certainly cut off his mustaches in order to look more like one of them."

The quaker gentleman gently nodded his head for about the sixth time since she had begun talking, which seemed to be intended as a sort of civil assurance that he heard her, but he uttered no sound, save that inevitably produced by the act of eating. Mrs. Allen Barnaby here paused for a moment that she might herself eat a few mouthfuls, for she was exceedingly hungry, but having done this with as little loss of time as possible, she began again.

"Perhaps you are not aware, sir, of the peculiar interest which Philadelphia in particular has for English people, and for myself indeed beyond all others. My object in coming to this country was solely to obtain information on the state of the slave population throughout the United States, as I am engaged by the first publisher in London to write a work upon the subject."

The quaker gentleman on hearing these words, crossed his knife and fork upon his plate, and turned himself round so as to command the side front of Mrs. Allen Barnaby's person. On perceiving the advantage she had gained, she performed precisely the same evolution herself, thereby bringing herself very satisfactorily face to face with the drab-coloured individual whom she wished to propitiate.

"Thee art writing on the subject of slavery?" he said, after looking at her steadily for a few seconds, and speaking in a tone that seemed to express a doubt if he had rightly understood her.

"Yes, my good sir," she replied, casting down her eyes with great modesty. "I have been urged to undertake the important task by a personal application of the very highest kind; so high, indeed, that it would be inconsistent with etiquette did I particularise it further."

"Thee must be urged to the undertaking by higher authority than any the earth can show," said the quaker gentleman with considerable solemnity, and slightly raising his hand to indicate the region from whence it should come. "May I ask thee what are thy views upon the subject?"

An inferior mind might have been daunted a little by these words, and more still, perhaps, by the tone in which they were spoken, but they produced no such effect on Mrs. Allen Barnaby; on the contrary, she felt her courage rise as she perceived that she was perfectly right in the ground she had taken, and that she had nothing to do but adhere carefully to the plan she had so rapidly conceived, in order to insure for the future a degree of success *fully as brilliant as that which she had already obtained.* She

answered readily, therefore, but with her hand pressed upon her heart, her eyes solemnly raised, and her voice skilfully pitched to a tone of the deepest feeling—

“My views, sir, are those of a reflecting Christian,” that being the exact phrase which she had heard bitterly ridiculed by Judge Johnson, when he was describing the “out of the abolitionists.”

“In that case, thee art about to do what every good man’s voice will be raised to bless thee for,” said the Quaker gentleman. “If thee dost it, friend, to the best of thy power,” he added, “thee shalt find that, let thy learning and thy skill in authorship be great or small, thee shalt meet with the gratitude and good-will of a very large body of the stranger people amidst whom thy holy purpose hath brought thee.”

This concluding assurance was, of course, exceedingly welcome to the lady; but, nevertheless, there was something in the Quaker gentleman’s allusion to the possibility of her not being an accomplished author, which she did not quite approve; and after a moment’s reflection, she said—

“I would never, dear sir, have ventured to trust my pen as such a theme, had not its earlier efforts been already approved in the most flattering manner by the best judges among my countrymen. Under my maiden name I have published many successful works; but, as my present object is not fame, but utility, I have determined, by the advice of one of the most exalted characters in England, both as to worth and station, *not* to let the name under which I have published be known as long as I remain in this country. My reason for this self-denying reserve is to be found in my earnest wish to see things exactly as they are, without running the risk of having my judgment warped by the species of flattering adulation which literary fame is sure to produce in this enlightened country. That the precaution was not unnecessary, we have already found; for, being determined to see everything by my own eyes, and judge everything by my own understanding, I prevailed upon my beloved and most indulgent husband to let me land on our first arrival from England at New Orleans—that great stronghold of the abominable system that my soul abhors. My honest wish was not to exaggerate in speaking of its effects, and the only way of being sure to avoid this, was by contemplating those effects with my own eyes. But it unfortunately happened that there was a gentleman at New Orleans who had seen me in Europe, and who recognised me as ———, as the author of the works to which I have alluded. The consequence of which was, that all the most important families in that part of the Union, came forward in a body to welcome me, hoping, as I suspect, that I might lend a pen which has been acknowledged to have some power, to advocating the atrocious system that reigns among them. You may easily believe, my dear sir, that their advances were not

very cordially received, but, of course, I could not avoid hearing in immense quantity of argument in favour of the system."

"And thee didst not find the arguments worth much?" he replied, with a gentle smile.

"Worth? Mercy on me, dear sir, they made me perfectly sick and ill. I never suffered so much from hearing people talk, in my whole life before."

All this did not pass amidst the silence of an almost wholly quaker linner-table, without attracting the attention of every one seated at it. Mrs. Simcoe forgot Patty's distressing want of a shawl, while she listened to the discourse of her more prudent mother, and more completely still while observing the attention paid to it by her richest, and, in every way, most important guest, John Williams, the well-known quaker philanthropist. This gentleman, who had amassed a very handsome fortune as a Philadelphian banker, had, for some years past, fixed his residence at a handsome mansion, at the distance of ten miles from the city, making the boarding-house of Mrs. Simcoe, his well-esteemed cousin and friend, his head-quarters whenever he found occasion to revisit it. This good man was not only in every way entitled to respect, but possessed it so universally as to render the fact of his entering into conversation with Mrs. Allen Barnaby a reason amply sufficient to make every individual at the table, both male and female, desirous of conversing with her too. The knives and forks were either laid aside entirely, or else used so cautiously as to prevent any sound from that quarter interfering with the general wish of hearing what it was that the stout, high-coloured English travelling lady could have to say that should make John Williams listen to her with so much attention. But not even this universal feeling of interest in what was going on, could long postpone that strong American propensity to start up from the dinner-table as soon as hunger is appeased, which renders that great luxury of European life, *table talk*, almost unknown to them.

But this interruption, ill-timed as it seemed to Mrs. Allen Barnaby at the moment, was not sufficient to check the purpose of the good quaker to become, without any delay, better acquainted with her. Perhaps John Williams had never in his life looked in the face of a lady which he felt less inclination to look at again, than that of Mrs. Allen Barnaby. But what did that signify? John Williams felt that it was his duty to make himself acquainted with her, and it must, therefore, have been a very serious obstacle indeed which could have prevented his doing so. With his usual quiet, passive sort of decisiveness, the worthy quaker immediately made up his mind as to the manner in which this was to be brought about; and as soon as Mrs. Simcoe rose, a movement immediately followed by the rising of the whole party, he walked round the table to the place occupied by his wife Rachel, with whom all his *journeyings*, whether long or short, were ever taken, and said to

her, "Wife, thee must come with me to ask yonder foreign lady to go to thy parlour with thee."

The tall, stately, prim-looking Mrs. Williams instantly prepared to obey, but not without fixing a glance of the most unequivocal astonishment at the individual to whose side she was summoned. Had she been the very dirtiest of negroes, or the most wretched-looking of whites, no such feeling had been produced by it; but it would have been difficult for her to have imagined a face and figure that she would have thought less likely to attract her spouse than those of the person she was now approaching, as rapidly as the unchangeable sedateness of her pace would permit.

"Rachel Williams," said the good man, as soon as he had succeeded in bringing the strangely matched pair face to face, "Rachel Williams, I would have thee give the hand of sisterly fellowship to this stranger. Thee hast not told me thy name," he added, addressing Mrs. Allen Barnaby. "How be'st thou called!"

"My name," replied our heroine, with a smile, an attitude, and an accent, all intended to testify the extreme delight at this introduction, "My name is Barnaby, Allen Barnaby, Mrs. Major Allen Barnaby, and most happy do I feel in being thus permitted to present myself to those who must be so able to afford me effectual assistance in the important object I have before me."

"Thee must come with us to our own quiet parlour," said the good man, offering his hand to lead her, "and when thee art there thee canst explain fully, both to my wife and to me, not only thy object, but the means by which thee dost hope to accomplish it, and then we shall be able to discover in what way we may best be able to help thee."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby's thanks were profuse and ardent, and she yielded her plump hand to the thin fingers of the quaker with a flourish that she felt at her heart to be very like the manner in which she had once seen Mrs. Siddons lay her palm on that of King Duncan. But just as they had reached the door, with the fawn-coloured Rachel following close behind, it suddenly occurred to our heroine that it would be advisable that she should exchange a word or two with the rest of her party before she separated herself from them.

"I beg your pardon, my dearest sir, a thousand times, but you must, if you please, permit me to say one single word to my dear excellent husband, before I retire with you to your own apartments."

"Dost thee wish thy husband to come with us also?" demanded the amiable quaker.

"Oh no!" was the reply. "You are very kind—excessively kind, indeed; but my good major knows the business to which I am devoting myself, and as he has considerable confidence in me, dear man, he never interferes, for fear, as he kindly says, that he should puzzle the cause by interrupting me. But I just wish to

say one word to him, and to my daughter, the Lady of Don Tornorino, to prevent her being surprised at my not returning with them to our own rooms."

"Surely, surely," replied John Williams, standing back with his wife to let the rest of the company pass out, "we will wait for thee till thou art ready for us."

Thus sanctioned, Mrs. Allen Barnaby stepped back, and laying one hand on the arm of her husband, and the other on that of her daughter, she pushed them gently before her into the recess of a bow window, and then said in a whisper, winking a good deal, first with one eye, and then with the other, in order to make them understand that she had more to say than it was convenient to speak at that moment—

"I am going with these topping quakers into their sitting-room. I shall get on with them, never you fear. Good-by," and then glided back to her new friends, and in the next moment passed through the door with them, and was out of sight.

Patty and her father stood staring at each other for a moment, and then both laughed, while the mystified Don, who understood only that his august mother-in-law was gone somewhere, with a pair of the most incomprehensible people he had ever beheld, and that they were forbidden to follow, raised one of his black eyebrows to the very top of his yellow forehead, and the other within half an inch of it, while he waited till his wife had sufficiently recovered her gravity to reply to his somewhat petulant "Vat for?"

When at length the answer came, however, it was only in a repetition of his words, "Vat for, darling? I am sure I could not tell you if my life depended upon it, unless it means that ma's gone mad."

"No, no, Patty," said the major, recovering his gravity. "Do not alarm yourself. Ma is not gone mad, I promise you, but knows what she is about as well as any lady that ever lived. But upon my life, Patty, if we are all to sail in the wake of these prim quakers, you must alter your rigging a little, my dear, or you'll be left out of the convoy, and what's to happen then?"

"I sail in the wake of your detestable quakers!" exclaimed Patty, almost with a scream. "If there's any one thing on God's earth that I hate and abominate more than all the rest put together, it is a quaker; and if you think, any of you, that I mean to skewer myself up in a gray wrapper, and go theeing and thouing, to please them, and that for the sake of getting a morsel of daily bread to eat, you are mistaken."

This being uttered with a good deal of vehemence, and an angry augmentation of colour, while something that looked like tears glittered in her eyes, her father instantly lost all disposition to mirth, and replied in a tone of the most coaxing fondness—

"What in the world have you got into your head, my darling

Patty? You can't suppose, for a moment, that I would let any body plague you to do what you did not like? Did I ever do it since you were born, Patty? You know very well, dearest, that I never did, and that I always think it worth while to battle for you, whatever I may do for myself, so for goodness' sake don't begin to cry. You know I can't bear it."

"Yes," returned his handsome daughter with a sob, "I know all that very well, papa, I know that you have always been a great deal more good-natured to me than ever mamma was. But that makes little or no difference now, and I don't think it is at all right for married people to go on living as Tornorino and I do, just as if we were two tame cats kept to play with, with a basket to sleep in, milk to lap, and a morsel of meat to mumble. I don't like it at all, and I don't think the Don likes it at all better than I do."

The major probably knew by experience that when his Patty was thoroughly out of humour, it did not answer to argue with her; and therefore, without saying a single syllable by way of reply to the speech she had just uttered, he tucked her arm with a sort of jocular air under his own, and giving the Don a good-humoured wink as he passed him, led her out of the room, saying—

"Come, Patty, my dear, we have got a sort of holiday this evening, haven't we? Let us use it by going to the theatre. I saw abundance of fine things advertised, and I know you love a play to your heart."

Nothing could have been more judicious than this proposal; Patty appeared to forget all her sorrows in a moment, and springing forward with a bound that seemed to send her half-way up the stairs before its impulse was exhausted, exclaimed—

"That's the best thing you ever said in your life, pap. Come along, Don! I'd rather go to a play, any time, than be made a queen."

A few minutes' quiet walking through the clean and orderly streets of Philadelphia, brought them to the handsome Chestnut-street Theatre, and a few minutes more found Patty seated to her heart's content in the front row of a box very near the stage, and her still dearly-beloved Don close beside her. The major, however, who had taken his station behind, could not control the spirit of busy activity which was ever at work within him beyond the first act. He might pay himself for their tickets, he thought, at any rate, if he could but find a billiard-table; and saying, as he laid a hand upon the shoulder of both son and daughter, "You two can take care of one another," he slid out of sight and escaped.

Though the yellow-faced Don was neither so young nor so fresh as his wife, he enjoyed the amusement which he was thus peaceably left in possession of, quite as much as she did. The piece was Beaumarchais and Mozart's "Barbiere di Sevigilia," adapted to the American stage, and despite the doubtful improvement of sundry alterations, the Spaniard was in ecstasies. He was himself

It means a bad performer on the flute, and such a longing eyed him as he watched the performer on that instrument, who sat almost immediately under him, once more to listen to his own notes upon it, that for some minutes after the opera ended, he was seated in reverie.

"What is the matter with you, Tornorino?" said his delighted wife, clapping her hands as she recollected that there was still another piece to be performed. "You don't enjoy it half as much as I do."

The Don looked silently in her handsome face for about a minute, and then said—

"What should you say, Pati, if—" the rest was whispered. But whatever he said pleased her so well, that the thoughts of it seemed to divide her attention with the gay afterpiece, for she eagerly renewed the conversation at intervals during the whole time it lasted. Nor did the discussion thus begun, end here; it appeared to have equal charms for both; it lasted them through their lingering walk back to Mrs. Simcoe's, kept them long awake after they retired to rest, and was renewed the very moment they were awakened in the morning. The subject of these interesting conversations shall be explained hereafter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

To sooner were John Williams and his loving wife left to themselves by the departure of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, after one of the longest and most confidential tea-drinkings ever indulged in, than they exchanged looks full of pleasant meaning; and while the gentle woman sat silent from habitual reverence to her husband, the thoughtful man sat silent too for some short space, feeling half afraid of committing a folly by expressing how very greatly he was pleased by the adventure which had befallen them.

At length, however, the smiling silence was broken by his saying—

"Tell me, Rachel, without fear or favour, what dost thee think of our new acquaintance?"

Thus encouraged, Rachael Williams meekly replied—

"I rejoice because I see thee rejoice, John Williams, at finding that one has come amongst us who takes to heart the cause of the oppressed negro; but the joy of my own heart would be more full, and my confidence in the promised good more firm, if this help and aid came not in so gaudy a clothing. Besides, I think not that it quite seems, John Williams, to see a woman of such ripened beauty with ringlets and love-locks fluttering with every breeze that

blows. But if thee dost tell me that this is prejudice, John Williams, it shall go hard with me but I will amend it, and for the future see only the woman's purpose, and not the woman."

"No, Rachel, no," replied the worthy quaker; "I should be loath that thy dutiful submission to thy husband's word should be put to so hard a trial, or that thy faithful love should cost thee thy honest judgment. I like not the aged Englishwoman's love-locks better than thee dost, my good Rachel; but shall we quarrel with the help that the Lord has sent us, because it comes in a shape that is not comely to our eyes? What need is there that this foreign woman-writer should be as goodly and as gracious in my sight as thee art, Rachel? With her looks we have little to do; but trust me, if she knows how to write, she comes amongst us armed with a power which we who have a battle to fight would do wrong to treat lightly. This power she frankly offers to range on our side, and in my judgment it would be folly to reject it. How it comes to pass I know not, Rachel," continued John Williams, after pausing a minute or two in meditation, "but certain it is, that notwithstanding all the abuse and belittling which the Union from Georgia to Maine pours forth without ceasing against the old country, notwithstanding all this, there is not an English goose-quill that can be wagged about us, right or wrong, witty or dull, powerful in wisdom, or mawkish in folly, but every man Jonathan in the States is rumpant as a hungry wolf that seeks his food till he gets hold of it, and straightway it is devoured as if his life depended upon his swallowing the whole mess, let him find it as nauseous as he may. Such being the case, Rachel, it behoves those who, like us, have undertaken to fight the good fight in the cause of an oppressed race, to welcome with joy and gladness the aid of every English pen likely to be bold enough to set down the truth in this matter. If the best written treatise that ever was penned were to come forth to-morrow in favour of universal emancipation by John Williams of Philadelphia, thee dost know right well, Rachel, that it would only go to line trunks and wrap candles. But if this curly-wigged fat lady verily and indeed sets to work and prints a volume or two about the enormities she has seen in the Slave States, and the Christian good sense she will be able to listen to in the Free ones, we know, at any rate, that the books will be read, and that is something, Rachel."

"Yes, truly is it," replied his faithful wife; "and woe betide the folly that would stop so godly a work, because its agent came from a foreign land, where old women wear unseemly head-gear. It shall not be thy wife, John Williams, that shall show any such untimely attention to outward apparel."

"Thee speaks even as I expected to hear thee, Rachel, after the first effect of this large lady's finery was passed off; and now, dear wife, we will go on, hand in hand together, in helping and urging forward the good work."

Such being the state in which Mrs. Allen Barnaby had left the inds of her quaker friends, it scarcely need be doubted that with her penetrating powers of observation, she took her leave of them, extremely well satisfied with the result of her first Philadelphian experiment.

It was not, however, without a pretty considerable degree of fatigue that she had reached the point at which she had aimed. It was a wearying, and in truth a very exhausting occupation to go on through a whole evening labouring to appear precisely what you are not; and so perseveringly had Mrs. Allen Barnaby done this during the hours she had passed with the good quakers, that when she reached her own room she could not resist the temptation of going immediately to bed and to sleep, although the major was not yet returned from his search after sporting men and a billiard-table, and although she felt not a little impatient to report progress to him. But nature would have her way, and for that night Major Allen Barnaby heard nothing more from his admirable wife but her snoring.

Less silent and less sleepy were the pair that occupied the chamber on the opposite side of the corridor. It is quite time that the conversation which demonstrated the consequences of their evening at the theatre should now be recorded, as the results which followed upon it came so quickly, that I may otherwise be induced to the necessity of narrating effects first and their causes after.

"And if you will do just exactly what you have said, my own beautiful darling," exclaimed Madame Tornorino, as soon as the door of their sleeping apartment was closed, "I will love and dote upon you as long as ever I live. And won't we have fun, Don? And won't we make the old ones stare? And, I say, Tornorino, won't we enjoy eating and drinking, and waking and sleeping, without being obliged to care a cent for any body, and with money of our very own, own, own, without saying thank ye for it, to any mortal living? Won't it be fun, Torní?"

"I no contradict you, ma belle," returned Tornorino. "It would be fun, if fun means *bien beau*, to do what we like, sans credit from nobody. But we must tink, my beautiful Pati, *raisonnement*, we must tink considerable before we give up the papa and the mamma and all that they have got to make us pardon quelques *insagrémens*."

"Don't be an idiot, Don," replied his animated wife. "Upon your life and soul, Tornorino, if you do turn out a coward and a fool, I will run away from you as sure as my name's Patty. Do you think I don't know the papa and the mamma, as you call them, better than you do? And do you think I want to creep about half-starved, as you used to do in London, my fine Don? Not a bit of it, I promise ye. What the old ones have got, I shall have, you may depend upon that. let me do what I will to affront

them—and I won't be kept in leading-strings any longer, I tell you. So just choose between living with me or without me. I will go on the stage, Tornorino, that's the long and the short of it, in one word. If you choose to stand by me, good; that is what I shall like best, because, as you know, I dote upon you so; but if you plague me the least bit in the world by way of making me give up the scheme, I'll run away from you before you can say Jack Robinson."

"No, no, no, my Pati beauty," replied her husband, with a very tender caress, "I shot myself directly if you run away your beauty from me, I will indeed."

"And will you let me go upon the stage without trying to coax me out of it?" said Patty, shaking her head expressively.

"Yes, my angel, I will; only I would not have no pleasure at all, if we were only to get on just as I did once before myself when I tried in the orchestra of Drury Lane. I was very much near starving, my Pati!" said poor Tornorino, mournfully.

"Stuff and nonsense, darling," replied his wife; "you in the orchestra of Drury Lane was one thing, and I on the stage at Philadelphia shall be another. Besides I tell you, Don, that pap would no more bear to see me want anything, than he would bear to want it himself. Mamma likes me well enough, I believe, and is as proud of me as a peacock is of his tail; but pap is my sheet-anchor, and as I must know him rather better than you, Mr. Don, I'll just beg you not to trouble me any more by talking of starvation and such like agreeable conversation, for it's what I most abominate; and I'll just trouble you to remember that if you please, and never let me hear such a word again as long as you live."

The amiable Tornorino did but mutter one little word or two under his breath, which would have signified, if interpreted, that he thought he knew Major Allen Barnaby as well as most people, and then he pledged the honour of an hidalgo that his charming Patty should never again be tormented by any vulgar doubts, or fears on the subject of daily bread; and then they proceeded to discuss, in the most animated and agreeable manner, what sort of dress would best become the fair *débutante*, and this most important question decided, that of character followed after; in short, half the night was passed in arranging the preliminaries of Madame Tornorino's appearance upon the Philadelphian stage, which she felt confident would terminate her tiresome dependence upon "Pa and Ma," and make both her fortune and fashion for ever.

"Pa and Ma," meanwhile, were on their parts as meritoriously intent upon turning their talents to account as their enterprising daughter, and the early dawn found them in very animated discussion upon the best mode of effecting this.

The major had returned from his search after "some opening in his own way," in very ill-humour with the noble city of Philadelphia, declaring that, since he was born, he had never seen such

collection of broad-brimmed quizzes; and as to billiards, they knew no more about it than so many children.

"Then you should be the more rejoiced, my dear, that I am able to make a good thing of it," replied his wife, after very tentatively listening to this melancholy account. "If they don't know much about billiards, they do about books; and the broad-brims have their eyes open wide enough, I promise you, on the enormous importance of securing on their side a person who is master of the pen, or mistress either; my dear, if you like the phrase better."

"That is all vastly well, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," replied the major, giving way to the rather strong feeling of ill-humour which his own abortive attempts had generated. "It is vastly well for you to strut and crow, because you find a parcel of idiots ready to be gulled by all the rhodomontade nonsense you are pleased to talk to them; but will that enable us all to go on living in the style we have lately been used to?"

"I never talk to you when you are in a passion, my dear," returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, composedly, "for I know it does not answer."

"God knows, my dear, I don't want you to talk," was the conjugal reply; "what I do want is, that you should understand what I mean to be off, and the sooner the better, for the place seems to be about equally dull, costly, and unprofitable—so you may set about packing as soon as you will. I shall be ready to start to-morrow at the very latest."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby remained silent for a minute or two, but the pause was not altogether occasioned by obedience to her husband's hint; she was balancing in her able mind, during the interval, the comparative advantages of trusting to a good breakfast to ameliorate his ill-humour, or of disregarding his uncourteous wish for silence, and pouring forth upon him at once the brilliant history of her last night's success. Being a little afraid of him when he was in a passion (which to do him justice did not often happen), it is most likely that she would have chosen the former course, had he not suddenly said when preparing to leave the room—

"There is no good in mincing the matter; I shall go at once and tell Mrs. Simcoe that we don't much like the place, and mean to be off to-morrow."

"Nay, then, I can keep silent no longer, Donny!" exclaimed the heroine, in the most Siddonian tone imaginable. "You know what you say, major—you know not what you are about to do! Alas! how weak and wilful is the mind of man! How short, how very short a time ago was it, that you vowed you never would decide on anything without consulting me! Yet now, use as you find a society of black—of gentlemen, who might be as likely to win money as to lose it, you resolutely tell me

that you are determined to leave the place, though I have every reason on earth to believe that I may speedily raise a very considerable sum here."

Major Allen Barnaby was by no means the most unreasonable man in the world, and, therefore, instead of bouncing out of the room upon hearing these reproaches, he turned round while in the very act of leaving it, and said, with something almost approaching to a smile—

"Come along then, wife, sit down, and tell me all about it at once, but don't make it very long, there's a good soul."

This unconvincing restraint upon her eloquence was certainly painful; nevertheless Mrs. Allen Barnaby knew better than to notice it—nay, she even complied with the rude condition upon which she had been permitted to unburden her full heart, and did so as succinctly as possible, only permitting herself, after concluding her statement, to say—

"Now then, Major Allen Barnaby, I leave it to you to decide whether the chance of profit is greater from our remaining among these very particularly rich people, who are ready to worship the very ground I tread upon, or from our setting off again upon a wild-goose chase in the hope of meeting some fool or other who may be cajoled into losing money to you."

"I should vote for the staying beyond all doubt, wife," replied the mollified major, "if you could but contrive to make me see my way through all the theeing and thouing you have been so amusingly repeating to me, and to the solid cash that you expect to find at the end of it. We want *the ready*, wife—the cash, the rhino, the Spanish wheels, as they call their sprawling dollars, and, unless you can manage to clutch this, I'll tell you fairly that I would not give a gooseberry for all their civility, because, my dear, I don't know any stock in any land that I can buy into with it."

"Major Allen Barnaby," replied his wife, after having listened to him in resolute silence till he had ceased to speak, "wise as you are, you don't know the value of ready money one bit better than I do. That No. 1 comes first, I well know, and No. 2, let it be what it will, comes a long way after it. So you need not talk any more, if you please, about giving gooseberries in return for such breakfasts and dinners as we got at Big-Gang Bank. But, in justice to my own honest earnings, I think it is but fair to remind you that you *do* love a good dinner, Major Allen Barnaby, and that the getting it, day after day, as you did from the Beauchamps, and capital good lodgings into the bargain for nothing, will save dollars if it does not make them."

"All quite true, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," returned her spouse, mimicking a little her Siddonian dignity of tone. "But, nevertheless, you must please to observe that at this present moment, we are not one single cent the richer for all your palavering with the

slave-holders, but that my little games of piquet and *écarte* have left their traces very comfortably in my pocket-book."

"And much you would have enjoyed the comfort, Donny," said his wife, relaxing into a laugh, "if I had declined the poisoning, and left you to abide the *second* settling of your play account with the honourable Mr. Themistocles Joseph John Hapford."

"Yes, my dear," he replied, returning her laugh: "your poisoning was first-rate, and worth all your preaching, you may take my word for it. And once for all, wife, without any more joking and squabbling about the matter, you must make up your mind to understand that it won't suit my views, to go on travelling through the country, dressing as fine as lords and ladies, and playing agreeable from morning to night, without getting any more by it than just bed and board. I am not so young as I was, my good Barnaby, and I feel the necessity of looking forward a little, and making up something like a purse against old age and a rainy day. If I find that they are too much in my own way here, I'll be off to Madrid, or to Paris, or Baden-Baden. It's all one to me. I really don't care the value of a straw in what kingdom of the earth I set up my coining machine, but coin I must, wife, somewhere or other. If you will be so obliging as to give me the pleasure of your company through all these possible ins and outs by sea and by land, of course I shall be delighted; but if you unhappily decline it, and prefer remaining here, writing books for and against negro slavery, I am sorry to say it, but I shall be under the necessity of sacrificing your charming society, and setting off without you."

"And your daughter, sir?" said his wife, not a little provoked at the tone of this long harangue; "may I take the liberty of asking if you intend to make her one of your travelling party?"

"Why, yes, my dear, I certainly think I shall. Tornorino is very useful to me, and I rather suspect that he would think it more profitable to be in partnership with me than with you."

"This is all waste of time, major," said his wife, suddenly resuming her usual tone. "Will you agree to allow me one day's trial with these quakers? If the ready, the cash, the rhino, the Spanish wheels that you talk about do not appear tolerably ready and certain, I will agree to set off with you in whatever direction you like to go. Only one day! If I fail I will be ready to start by this time to-morrow."

"Then to this time to-morrow I give you," he replied. "But remember, my dear, your proofs of success must be pretty substantial before I accept them."

"Agreed," was her short reply.

And Mrs. Simcoe's breakfast bell making itself heard at the same moment, they left their room together, meeting the Don and his lady on the top of the stairs; and then, with every appearance of family confidence and harmony, they descended to the *existing parlour together*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NOTWITHSTANDING that the general breakfast eating was performed at the usual American pace, Mrs. Allen Barnaby was the first who had finished the meal and quitted the table.

The departure of one or two of the boarders had caused an alteration in the juxtaposition of those who remained, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby was no longer seated next to her friend John Williams. But this change was by no means disagreeable to her; she felt that the time for mere chit-chat was past, however skilfully she might manage it, and therefore rather rejoiced than regretted the necessity of suffering the good quaker to eat his morning meal in peace. Yet, even while divided by the whole length of the table from her new friends, she had found means to propitiate further their good opinion by the greatly improved fashion of her garments.

During the whole of the conversation with her husband which has been recorded above, her fingers had been notably and most ingeniously employed in altering a variety of little ornamental decorations which she thought were more elegant than prudent. From her morning gown she abstracted every bow, together with a deep trimming of very broad imitation black lace from the cape of it, which left this addition to her grave-coloured silk dress of such very moderate dimensions as entirely to change its general effect, and to give to her appearance a snug sort of succinct tidiness, such as it had probably never exhibited before.

The cap she selected for the occasion was one which owed almost all its Barnabian grace to a very magnificent wreath of crimson roses, which ran twiningly and caressingly round the front of it, and these being removed by the simple operation of withdrawing a few pins, left as decent a cap as any one would wish to see.

Of her half-dozen luxuriously-curling "fronts," she chose the least copious and the least curling, and having bedewed it with water from a sponge, induced its flowing meshes to repose themselves upon her forehead with a trim tranquillity that might have befitted a Magdalen. It was thus that she now encountered the friendly eyes of John Williams and his wife Rachel; and as it never entered into the imagination of either of them that the foreign lady should have thus metamorphosed herself to please them, they felt, particularly the worthy Rachel, some disagreeable twinges of conscience at remembering the scoffing remarks that had been made on the love-locks, when it now seemed evident that it must have been mere carelessness or accident, rather than design, which had occasioned the superfluous hair to flow so wantonly.

It was therefore with even more than the hoped-for degree of gentle kindness that Mrs. Allen Barnaby's proposal of paying them a visit in their own drawing-room was received, and ten o'clock precisely was named as the hour at which they should be waiting to welcome her. That Mrs. Allen Barnaby was punctual need not be doubted. Much indeed depended upon this interview. If she failed now, she felt that she was pledged to give up the authorship scheme, from which she not only anticipated much substantial profit, but which had already given her so much delightful gratification, that the thought of abandoning it was inexpressibly painful to her feelings. Her hopes, however, so completely outweighed her fears, that it was with a delightful consciousness of power, and the most cheering anticipations of success, that she gave her soft quaker-like tap-tap at the quaker's door.

"Come in," was uttered in the very gentlest of tones, and in the next moment my greatly altered heroine stood in straight-haired comeliness before the meekly approving eyes of her new acquaintance.

"The permission to wait on you thus early," she began, "is a kindness for which I can hardly be sufficiently grateful, for the work to which I have dedicated myself seems to press upon my conscience. I feel as if I were not labouring with sufficient devotion and energy on that which may perhaps involve the happiness of thousands. This is an awful consideration, my dear friends!"

"Thee art right, friend Allen Barnaby," replied John Williams. "It is in this manner that all those who meddle in so great an undertaking should feel. It is not so much insensibility to their frightful sufferings which the poor negroes have to complain of, as want of energy in the means adopted for their relief. Tell us frankly and freely, good friend, what may be the difficulty or embarrassment which is most likely to impede thy progress, and I pledge to thee the word of an honest man, that if John Williams can remove it, it shall be removed."

These were not words to be listened to with indifference by Mrs. Allen Barnaby. She was indeed considerably more delighted than she thought fitting to express; she had no objection to appearing grateful for the support so kindly offered, but she did *not* wish that the quiet quakers should perceive all the triumphant joy and gladness that she felt throbbing at her heart. She had contrived to learn, by one or two intelligent questions addressed to Mrs. Simcoe's *help*, that John Williams had very ample power to remove all such embarrassments and difficulties as at present beset her, and had he not now pledged his honourable quaker word to use in her behalf what power he had? Now then was the moment of projection, as the chemists say, now then was the very crisis of the experiment that was to prove whether she did indeed possess the precious secret by which *palaver* might be converted into gold, or whether she must henceforth

submit to the degrading position of a merely ornamental appendage to her more highly-gifted husband's establishment."

She preluded the answer which was to settle this important question by a deep sigh, and then bending forwards towards the little work table which supported the scissors, thimble, cotton-reel, and narrow morsel of fine lawn upon which the neat-handed Rachel had been employed when she entered, she remained for a few seconds supporting her head upon her hand in silence. Had attention been wanting in her audience, this piteous prelude would have been sure to command it, and when at length she spoke, not a syllable was lost on either John or Rachel.

"It is inexpressibly painful," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, slowly raising herself from her bending attitude, "to submit oneself even to the dictates of duty when they command us to do or to say anything that may be misconstrued into—alas! how shall I find a word to express what I mean that shall not sound too harshly?—into abusing the generous kindness of those who stretch forth the hand of brotherly fellowship to assist us?"

"Nay, now, friend Barnaby, I must not have thee speak thus," interrupted John Williams, with the most expressive intonation of benevolence. "Remember that thy work is our work, and that thought will remove at once all such idle embarrassments as those thee speakest of."

"Oh true! most true!" exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with renovated courage, and as if suddenly conscious that she had no feelings of which to be ashamed, but altogether the contrary. "Never again will I give way to such weakness! You will, then, my excellent friends, listen to me as to a sister, while I confess to you that my husband, devoted to me as he is, and kind, too, upon most points, does not partake of the enthusiasm which has brought me to this noble, but misguided country."

"Yea! verily! It is then as I feared, Rachel! But take courage, friend Barnaby, and think not that we shall be the less inclined to give thee assistance, because we find thee wantest it more. Thee speakest well, friend Barnaby, in calling this, our misguided country, noble; and well pleased am I to find that thee hast clearness of judgment enough to see that it is indeed noble; in simple truth, friend Barnaby, it is the very noblest and most glorious country on the face of God's whole earth; and thee knowest there are spots on the sun. But progress, progress, good lady, and let us know in what, and how far it is, that thy husband opposes thy purpose?"

"Perhaps," replied my heroine, mildly, "opposes is too strong, too harsh a word to use when speaking of the conduct of Major Allen Barnaby. The very indulgence which induced him to leave his own country, where his highly-exalted reputation gives him a position so peculiarly agreeable, in order to gratify my wish in visiting this, must for ever insure my gratitude. But the fact is, that unfortunately he does not see this momentous question con-

cerning negro emancipation in the same light that I do; so strongly do we differ, indeed, that I am persuaded, though if I publish upon it, he will never come forward publicly to controvert my opinion, yet, that if I should not do so, he would be exceedingly likely to write upon the other side."

"Indeed," exclaimed John Williams, the smooth serenity of his countenance a little ruffled by the intelligence, "and dost thee think him capable of writing a work likely to produce any great effect?"

"It is strange for his own wife, and one who loves him too, as dearly as I do, to reply to such a question with regret, because it is only possible to reply to it in the affirmative," said she. "He has, perhaps, the most powerful talent of any man living in controversy. His wit, his eloquence—oh, it is something magical! and like many others, I believe, who are thus gifted, he certainly has pleasure in putting down what in this case he calls popular prejudice."

"This is heavy news, my good lady; very heavy news, I promise thee. An European coming to this country and publishing a powerful book in favour of negro slavery will do the cause more harm than thee may'st think for. The strongest weapon which we have got to use against the avarice of our misguided, but high-minded countrymen, is the universal condemnation of Europe, and anything tending to weaken that would be a misfortune indeed."

"I am aware of it," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with emphasis, "and this it is that makes me feel the importance of my own undertaking. The major knows that I am employing myself in writing on this awful subject, every detail of which harrows my very heart, while he, alas! treats it all with most sad levity, and he has told me very positively, though I must say without the slightest harshness—the good major is never harsh to me!—but he has told me that although he will never interfere to prevent my writing on this or any other subject (for, in truth, he is foolishly proud of what I have done in that way), yet that, as he cannot agree with me in the views I have adopted, he should hold himself inexcusably weak were he to permit any great expenditure of money in travelling about, merely, as he expressed it, to enable me to strengthen my abolition prejudices. Upon his saying this, which occurred when we were at New Orleans, I asked him if he would object to my spending a small sum, not exceeding three hundred pounds, which he knew I had by me, as especially my own, in travelling from city to city of this majestic country, in order to become generally acquainted with it. To this he frankly answered, No. He knew, he said, that the trifle I have mentioned was intended for the purchase of some sparkling ornament, but that if I preferred seeing your gems of cities to looking upon gems of my own, he saw no good reason to oppose me. This sum, my dear friends," continued Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "is, I grieve to say, totally exhausted, and I am under

the terrible necessity of abandoning a work in which my very heart and soul are engaged, or of submitting to the embarrassing alternative of confessing this fact to you, and beseeching you to give me your opinion as to the possibility of raising, by subscriptions for my forthcoming volumes, such a sum as may enable me to continue my researches; for, as you will readily believe, my principles forbid me to state facts with which I am unacquainted; and if I cannot succeed in immediately raising a little money for the purpose of prosecuting my inquiries in the Free States, I shall be obliged to return immediately to England, and instead of publishing my own work, have to endure the intense mortification of witnessing the appearance of another of principles diametrically opposite. Tell me, therefore, my kind and excellent friends, if you conceive it would be possible for me to raise such a subscription as I speak of?"

John Williams and his wife listened to this animated, but somewhat long harangue, in the profoundest silence. Neither cough, sneeze, hem, nor even audible breathing, interrupted the deep stillness in which she had the advantage of speaking. On ordinary occasions Mrs. Allen Barnaby would have been fully aware of the advantage this gave her, for she by no means liked to be interrupted while speaking, but now she almost felt that the stillness was too profound, for it seemed even to communicate itself to the eyelids of her auditors, which never winked: the looks of John being steadily fixed upon her face, and those of Rachel as steadily directed to the carpet. She almost feared to cease speaking, lest this chilling atmosphere of stagnant silence should condense itself into an icy refusal, but stop at last she must, and did, and then it took at least a minute ere John Williams raised his voice to answer her.

Her heart beat a good deal during this interval, and she became anything in the world but sanguine as to the result. Nor was her acuteness altogether deceived as to the meaning of all this. If there be a form of speech which will act like an incantation upon all alike, and before which slaveholders and emancipationists, Calvinists and Unitarians, Catholics and Quakers, Yankees and Creoles, will all shrink with equal sensitiveness, it is a demand for DOLLARS. On every other imaginable theme, they may, and probably will, differ widely; but on this they are unanimous.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby saw and felt this at her fingers' ends. But though this sensitive shrinking unquestionably was the first fruits of her eloquence, it was not the only one, neither was it the most lasting. She had arranged her arguments with great skill; and when, as John Williams examined and cross-examined her, she recapitulated all the dangers which threatened the cause in which he was enlisted in case her object was defeated, it was soon easy to see that her eloquence was gaining ground, and his prudence losing it.

At this stage of the business, John Williams would have given a good deal if his wife would but have looked him in the face; but she

was as far as possible from doing any such thing, making no other change in her attitude, after Mrs. Allen Barnaby had finished her opening speech, than what was absolutely necessary for the stretching out of her nice little white hand towards her nice little rose-wood work-table, and withdrawing thence the before-mentioned strip of lawn, to the hemming of which she again addressed herself with a pertinacity of industry which rendered all hope of her raising her eyes from it most completely abortive.

"Thee hast made a statement that it gives me great pain to hear," said John Williams, at length, in a tone that instantly turned the thoughts of Mrs. Allen Barnaby towards her packing up, and before he had uttered a second sentence she remembered with some satisfaction, that she had taken very few things out of their travelling recesses, and that if the worst came to the worst, she should not have a great deal of trouble in getting ready to set off, according to promise, on the following morning. But with all her acuteness, Mrs. Allen Barnaby did not yet quite understand the nature of a Philadelphian quaker.

The first feeling which displayed itself was naturally enough that which was common to every citizen of the great republic; but there were others which lay deeper, and which belonged both to the particular class and to the individual, which in the race of conflicting feelings were most likely to come in conquerors at last. But John Williams, though very far from being a dull man, was, nevertheless, not a quick one, and before he could fully make up his mind what he should say next, his interesting visitor rose, and assuming a look of very touching shyness, said—

"To give you pain in any way, my good sir, is the very last thing I would willingly do, and believe me, when I say that notwithstanding your evident unwillingness to enter actively into the business, I feel the most perfect conviction of your good-will to the cause, and am grateful for your kindness, though it cannot, as I perceive, be of a nature to serve me. Good morning, Mrs: Williams! Good morning, my dear sir!"

And thus saying, she moved towards the door, being, in truth, exceedingly desirous to get away; that she might indulge in the utterance of a few of the animated expletives which she felt trembling on her tongue, and set about packing as fast as she could. But her interview with the quakers was not over yet.

"Thee art over hasty, friend Barnaby," said John Williams, interposing his tall, upright person between his guest and the door. "In matters of business no one should ever be in a hurry. Sit thee down again, friend, sit thee down, and let us talk this matter quietly over."

They did sit down again, and they did talk the matter quietly over; so quietly indeed, so lengthily, so step by step, that the reader might have rather more than enough of it, were I to repeat word for word all that was spoken on that occasion. Suffice it to

say, that affairs wore a very different aspect, when at length Mrs. Allen Barnaby really did leave the room, from what they did when she first attempted to do so.

One feature only of the interview remained unchanged. Rachel Williams continued during the whole of it to maintain her industry and her silence, never once lifting her eyes from her hemming, and never once speaking a word.

Talking of the passions of a quaker may, to some people, I believe, appear like talking of the passions of a fish, but people so thinking cannot be natives of Philadelphia. The honest broad-brimmed abhorrence of slavery, and the hearty wish of bringing about a national abolition of it, does decidedly amount, in many instances, to a passion in the beautiful city of Grecian Banks, and flowery Catalpas. Our quiet-seeming friend, John Williams, was an instance of this, though his wife Rachel was not; for while she could not choose but remember (even if she had wished to forget it) that it was the same person who was now making a plain and specific application for dollars, that she had seen entering the dining-room the day before, the very emblem of all that a sober-minded female ought not to be, John himself had no room in his head or his heart for anything but the abolition question, and actually trembled when his conscience reminded him of the risk he had at one moment run, of suffering an ill-timed fit of avaricious caution to stifle an undertaking which promised such great advantage to the scheme that it was the first object of his life to advance.

It was therefore with a bright and triumphant eye that Mrs. Allen Barnaby met the inquiring glance of her husband, upon encountering him in the retirement of their own apartment, whither he had returned from an unprofitable morning stroll on purpose to receive her.

"You need not speak, my Barnaby!" he exclaimed, the moment he beheld her. "That you have succeeded, is just as easy seen as that you have a pair of the most expressive eyes in the world. And how in the world, my darling woman, have you contrived to screw money out of that parchment man?"

"I should be vastly sorry, major, if I thought that I should get no more than what my dear friend John Williams will disburse himself—though I have no fears either that he should fail me. But my projects are a good deal more extended than that, my dear, as you may perceive, if you will do me the favour of running your eye over this list of names—the most wealthy, the most respectable, and the most influential in Philadelphia, as I beg to inform you."

She then drew forth a large sheet of paper which she displayed before him, and on which were, in truth, inscribed about thirty of the first names of the city. To these persons, John Williams had promised to apply for subscriptions to Mrs. Allen Barnaby's book, giving her to understand, as he wrote each down, that on such an occasion she would be sure to receive a sum greatly exceeding the

price of many copies, for that he pledged himself to make them understand how vitally important to the undertaking was the raising a considerable sum at the moment.

"A considerable sum? I wonder what broadbrim calls a considerable sum—eh, my dear? Have you any notion?" demanded the major, with the saucy air of one not disposed to be easily contented.

"He mentioned no figures whatever, major—I cannot say that he did," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a slight frown. "But upon my honour, Donny, I don't think it would be wise just at present for us to stand out quarrelling with our bread-and-butter, only because we think it just possible that the butter may not be thick enough."

"I have no more idea of committing any such folly, than I have of building a church, my love, so don't alarm yourself," he replied. "Not only just at present, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, but just for ever, our calling and our profession will be to catch what we can. This is no bad trade depend upon it, even among Yankees, if the capital brought to it has a good deal of sterling brass, mixed with the gold of such a wit as yours, my Barnaby. Oh no, I have no intention, depend upon it, of declining these quaker dollars; nor can I express to you sufficiently, my charming partner, the admiration I feel for the brilliant versatility of your talents, nor can I behold the bold, not to say audacious approach towards puritanical attire which your appearance at this moment exhibits, without feeling that my happy destiny has mated me with a mind worthy of union with my own."

This flourishing compliment, which was accompanied by a low bow, made the lady get up and place herself before the glass, and as she stood there with her hands primly crossed before her, both husband and wife laughed heartily.

After this little indulgence of light heartedness, the well-matched pair entered upon a business-like discussion of their immediate arrangements. It was decided between them that Patty should be bribed by some new article of finery to be worn elsewhere, to make herself somewhat more decent in attire at the dinner-table, and also that Mrs. Allen Barnaby herself should lay out a few cents in mouse-coloured ribbon, and that the major and his martial mustache should keep out of the way, on pretence of botanising, in order to avoid the too obvious incongruity of appearance between them. This *botanising* notion was due to the ready invention of my heroine, and was rewarded by a fresh burst of conjugal admiration.

This very pleasant conversation ended by the major informing his wife, that although he had no hope whatever of *doing much* during the time they might find it desirable to remain under the patronage of her quaker friends, he was nevertheless not without *hope of doing something*, for he had found out two public billiard-

tables, which, though apparently carrying on business a little under the rose, would enable him to pass his time without having to reproach himself with that worst of all possible faults, *idleness*, which in his case, as she conscientiously observed, would be worse than in that of most others, inasmuch as he knew himself to be blessed with a degree of ability which rendered the employment of it a positive duty.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DURING the space of ten days or a fortnight, the sincere and steadfast-purposed John Williams was fully occupied in canvassing among his friends and acquaintance for such substantial patronage for Mrs. Allen Barnaby's work upon "Slavery in the United States of America," as her peculiar circumstances rendered necessary. Of all canvassing this species is decidedly the most difficult, let it be carried on where it will; but John Williams was not a man to withdraw himself from an enterprise merely because he found it difficult, and at length his perseverance so far succeeded that he ventured to announce hopes to his client of being able to raise the respectable sum of five hundred dollars, provided she would agree to make over the copyright of her forthcoming work to a quaker bookseller, who on that condition had agreed to undertake not only the publication of it, but also the collecting the promised subscriptions for the purpose of paying them over *in advance* to the authoress.

Perhaps my heroine never gave a more decided proof of ready cleverness than on this occasion. She would joyfully have accepted a single dollar in exchange for all the profit she actually anticipated from the publication of her unborn production; but on receiving this magnificent proposal from John Williams, she started, shook her head, sighed, dropped her eyes, and for the space of a minute and a half, exhibited with admirable skill all the symptoms of great disappointment, borne with meek patience and resolute philosophy.

"Thee dost not like this proposal, friend Barnaby?" said the good quaker, looking at her rather timidly. "Thee dost not think five hundred dollars will suffice for thy present necessities?"

"Not so, my dear sir," replied the admirable woman, with a modest humility of manner that was very striking; "the sum you name would be quite sufficient for the humble style to which I shall for this object reduce my manner of travelling. It is not *that*, my kind friend, which causes me to hesitate. But I confess to you *that* the idea of parting with the copyright of a work which I have

reason to believe will be very profitable, does startle me. I cannot but indeed consider it equivalent to parting with several thousand dollars."

"Indeed!" returned John Williams, feeling, good man, very much ashamed of having been made the organ of so unjust and ungenerous a proposition. "If that be the case, my good lady, I withdraw the offer with many apologies for having made it."

"Nay, dear sir, do not say that," she replied. "To you I must ever feel deeply grateful; and moreover, my good friend, we must not lose sight of my very peculiar position. I do not feel that I have the power to refuse this offer, though the terms of it do seem rather severe, for in fact, without the assistance it promises I can do nothing, and therefore, as you perceive, I must perforce accept it, or abandon at once and for ever an undertaking in which every feeling of my heart is engaged."

"I do believe thee, I do believe thee," replied the quaker, deeply touched by the generous devotion of the poor negro's advocate. "But thy goodness must not be the means of robbing thee of thy fair hopes of honest profit from thy labours. I must see my friend the bookseller again, and endeavour to bring him to reason."

"Perhaps, sir," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, timidly, and with the air of a person who knows that he is asking for a good deal, "perhaps, sir, your friend the bookseller might agree to give me one quarter share of the profits arising from the sale of the work after all expenses, including the advance of five hundred dollars, shall have been paid?"

"Nothing can be fairer or more liberal," replied John Williams, with an eagerness of manner that was almost unseemly in a quaker; but in fact he was greatly delighted at the idea of settling the business in a manner that he thought would be agreeable to all parties; and immediately seizing the stick, that ever stood ready in the corner (his ample beaver being already on his head), he declared his intention of immediately seeing the individual whose consent it was necessary to obtain, and left the room with a promise of bringing home the stipulated sum with him, which he would deliver to her, he said, at the same hour on the following morning, being engaged out to dinner with his wife, which would prevent their meeting again that day.

Mrs. Allen Barnaby rose from her chair at the same moment that he rose from his, for she had no inclination whatever to remain tête-à-tête with Rachel.

That very sensible woman and exemplary wife did not take any trouble to conceal from my quick-sighted heroine, that her liking for her did not increase by their lengthened acquaintance. In fact, though she strictly kept her word to her husband, and did not permit her own feelings or prejudices to be any hindrance to the work which had for its object the welfare of the negro race, she did, in honest truth, hate and detest Mrs. Allen Barnaby as much

as it was well possible for a Christian quaker to hate anything. She had hailed the first mitigation of brilliance in her as a symptom of seemly respect to the society of quakers in general, and to John and Rachel Williams in particular. But not content with this, Mrs. Allen Barnaby had gone on, day by day, adding little quaker *et ceteras* to her fitting out, which showed upon her like a white rose stuck in the unshapely ear of an elephant, till the worthy Rachel, who though a quaker, had enough of the woman in her to see through such trickery, felt persuaded that she was nothing better than a great overblown cheat, and in pursuance of this unpleasant persuasion spake to her little, and looked at her less, all which being carefully noted by my observant heroine, it is no great wonder that she bustled out of the room the very moment after John Williams left it, with no other leave-taking than a rapidly-enunciated, "Good morning, ma'am."

Nothing could exceed the air of gay good-humour with which the well-pleased major received his lady's account of what had passed; they were unquestionably a most happily-assorted couple, and as if to take instant advantage of the peculiar hilarity of their parents, the Don and his wife knocked at the door of their room just as my heroine had concluded her narrative, and declared that they were come with a joint petition that the whole party might go to the play that evening. No favour was ever asked at a more propitious moment; both the father and mother were in too happy a state of spirits not to relish any proposal the object of which was gaiety and amusement.

"Off with you, then, Tornorino," exclaimed Patty, joyously, "and get the very best places you can."

"Perhaps it will be better for me to undertake that part of the business, especially as I have a notion that one and all of you will look my way for money to pay for them," said the major.

"You are always a dear darling, papa, that I will say for you," replied his daughter, her bright eyes positively dancing in her head with glee; "but you can pay the Don, you know, when he comes back, and you'll find that he will get capital good places for you."

Thus reassured, the major gave up the point, and the interval of the messenger's absence was spent in very lively chit-chat by the parents and their darling daughter, who, to say truth, was not always equally disposed to bestow the advantage of her charming spirits upon them, when no other person was present to share their admiration.

The Don, however, did not linger on his way, but returned with two tickets for front places in one of the best boxes in the house; and these he presented to his august mother-in-law, informing her at the same time that they were the only very good places left, but that he had made an acquaintance with one of the gentlemen of the orchestra who had promised him an order for himself and his

"Then Patty shall go with her mother, Tornorino," said the major, good-naturedly. "I won't take a good place while Patty has got a bad one."

"It not be a bad one," returned the Don, earnestly. "It be a very good one."

"Good or bad, Torni," returned his wife, with great vivacity, "it will be no treat to me, you know, if I am to be parted from you, my darling. No, no, Mr. Pap, I know you mean to be very kind, and I thank you accordingly, but I shall sit with the Don, be sure of that."

The major returned some laughing compliment to her pigeon-like constancy, and promised not to interfere with it again.

As my heroine's particular friends were absent from the dinner-table that day, she had little or no opportunity for conversation, for her previous devotion to John Williams had prevented her taking her usual measures to obtain acquaintance with any one else. But Patty was more than usually talkative, and before the repast ended had addressed the interesting question, "Are you going to the play to-night?" to no less than five different persons. Three of these being very "dry" quakers, answered in the negative with something not far removed from a grunt or a groan; and of the two others, one said he did not know, while the other so far encouraged her prattling propensity as to inquire if there was to be anything particularly worth seeing in the performance that night.

Madam Tornorino's first reply to this very natural question did not sound very civil, for it consisted in a short loud laugh, which seemed to indicate that the person who had asked it, had been guilty of an absurdity; but having indulged in this mirthful propensity for a minute or two, she settled her features into more than usual gravity, and said—

"Upon my word, sir, I don't quite know, but we heard there was to be a new performer; didn't we, Don Tornorino?"

"*Mais oui*," returned her husband, bowing to the inquirer, "dere will be a *début* to-night."

"Then I shall certainly go," said the gentleman to whom he addressed himself; adding, "that is just what I like best."

And hereupon Patty laughed again; upon which her mother, a good deal shocked at her rudeness to the very well-dressed gentleman who appeared to occasion her mirth, said in an audible aside to the major—

"The dear creature is in such spirits at the idea of going to the theatre to-night, that she is ready to laugh at everything." An observation which was fully justified by her daughter suddenly clapping her hands, with the most *naïve* appearance of irrepressible glee, and again bursting forth into a fit of merriment so genuine, that it was almost impossible not to join in it.

"What were you laughing at, Patty?" said her father, taking

her arm as the party were dispersing after dinner, "I declare, my dear, I think you grow younger, as well as handsomer, every day. Doesn't she, Tornorino?"

"Oh! she is a *bien belle femme*," replied Tornorino, at the same time whispering something in her ear.

"And you are a beautiful man, my darling," she replied, withdrawing her arm from her father. "And he is going to give me another treat," she added; "for he says I must take a delightful walk with him before the play, and so I shall set off this very moment."

"Why, Patty, you will be tired to death," said her mother, "so dreadfully hot as it is. Upon my word you had much better lie down instead of trotting out in the sunshine."

"Thank'e for nothing, mamma," replied the lively beauty, snapping her fingers. "My husband always knows what is best for me, don't you, Don? So good-by, dear pap and mam, and the next time you see me, I hope you'll find that I am not at all the worse for my walk."

"Stay, Patty, stay," cried her father, calling after her as she walked off towards her own room with her Don; "I suppose you mean to come back in time to walk to the theatre with us."

"Upon my word, I don't suppose any such thing," returned his daughter, gaily. "At any rate, pap, you had better not wait for us," she added, "because as we are not going to sit together, there is no use in our bustling back just to be in time for you. I won't say but what I shall spend a 'levy' that I have got in the corner of my pocket, in treating the Don with an ice, so that most likely we shall not come back at all."

As no very reasonable objection could be made to this conjugal arrangement, the young couple were suffered to walk off without further opposition, while the seniors entered their own retreat together.

"Perhaps it is quite as well, major," said my heroine, "that they should leave us a little to ourselves this evening, for it is quite necessary that we should talk over what we have got to do next. I suppose we may reckon upon receiving these five hundred dollars to-morrow morning, and the sooner we can be off afterwards, the better I presume you will be pleased."

"Decidedly, my Barnaby," replied her husband. "But don't you think, my dear," he added, after meditating upon the subject for a minute or two, "don't you think that there will be something rather awkward in our running away the very moment you have got the money from them? Don't you think it will look odd?"

"Not the least in the world, Donny," replied his wife, with very prompt decision. "You forget that the very purpose for which I am to receive it, renders it absolutely necessary for me to travel with all the perseverance and activity possible into the other Free States. New York, you know, is one of them, and as

it is there we most wish to go, why should we not set off for it to-morrow? There are steamers going two or three times a day."

"If you have no objection, my dear, I am sure I have none; for to tell you the truth, I never hated a place so much in my life," returned her husband. "I never sit down to table without feeling as if I were put in the stocks. Confound their solemn faces, they positively give me the cramp."

This short dialogue sufficed to settle the question as to what they were to do next, and that no time might be lost, they employed themselves till it was time to set off for the theatre, in collecting together whatever had been unpacked, and putting all things in order for departure.

"There!" said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as she turned the key of her trunk with a very satisfactory snap, "now I shall be able to help Patty to-morrow; for, as we well know, she is always behind-hand."

Having completed this business, and been favoured with an early cup of tea in their own apartment, they set off for the theatre.

"Buy a bill, Donny," said my heroine, as they passed through the lobby. The request was complied with, and having reached the places secured for them, the major politely placed the play-bill in his lady's hand. Her spectacles were immediately applied, for alas! the beautiful Barnaby had reached the time at which they were necessary, and she proceeded to examine the bill of fare for the evening's amusement.

"Read it aloud, my dear, for you know I can't see in this owl's light," said the major.

The lady obeyed, and read, "The Merchant of Venice."

"Ah! that's a very good play," observed the major; "I remember seeing it in London. And who is the new performer Patty talked about?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby applied herself anew to the play-bill, and read aloud, "The part of *Nerissa* by a lady from England, being her first appearance."

"Oh! then, it is only some English actress who has never played here before," said the major. "It does not mean a first appearance."

"I suppose not," replied his wife. And then she obligingly read aloud the other parts of the bill, even to the name of the printer. This done, they both set themselves to examine the house (for they had arrived unnecessarily early), and criticised all the people who came into it; and in this way they beguiled the time till the curtain rose.

When the scene changed from Venice to Belmont, the stage was for a moment unoccupied and then two well-bedizened ladies entered at the farther end of it, and walked forward towards the footlights, for the first half of the distance in silence, and then con-

versing. The shorter of the two actresses was the favourite American Portia of the day; but the burst of applause which greeted their *entrée*, was evidently as much intended for the maid as the mistress, her novelty being as cordially greeted as the well-known reputation of the other.

"What a lovely woman!" was exclaimed by many voices at once.

"The stage is full of dust," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, rubbing her eyes; "I can't make out their features at all."

The major applied his opera-glass to his eye, and remained in contemplation of the fair creatures before him for several seconds. At length removing the glass from his eyes, and turning short round towards his wife, he whispered almost in her ear—

"By all that's sacred, wife, that girl in pink is Patty!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the portly lady, looking very much as if she intended to clamber upon the stage over the front of the box, the orchestra, and all other obstacles. "She dare not, Donny! She dare not for her life!"

The greatly irritated major did not exactly reply in words, "she dare do anything," but his tremendous frown said it for him, and by the time my heroine had herself looked through the glass, the same disagreeable truth impressed itself on her mind also, and she exclaimed, in a rage that was equally ill-timed and unprofitable—

"True enough, sir. And who is it that has spoilt her from first to last, and taught her in all ways to be an undutiful monster?"

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was by no means accustomed to give way in public to those little eruptions of warm temper to which she was constitutionally liable; but now the well-behaved major began to fear that she would lose all command of herself, and multiply all the evils of the exposure his high-spirited daughter was bringing upon them.

"We had better come away, my dear," he said, in the gentlest accents possible. "Nobody will know anything about her if we keep our own secret."

Fortunately the house was by no means crowded; and in the box they occupied, the only persons besides themselves in it, were two lounging men, whose whole attention seemed devoted at this moment to the stage. And no great wonder that it should be so. The very striking face and figure of Patty being just then displayed in the manner to make both as striking as possible; and though face, figure, attitude, and dress, might all perhaps have been classed as meretricious in their coarse attractiveness, there was, nevertheless, something of youthful brilliance in her appearance which most people would have found it difficult, at the first glance, to turn away from.

Whether either father or mother had sufficient of what may be called *decent* refinement, to feel all the painful degradation of such an appearance, may be doubtful; but both the one and the other

were instantly aware, that at the moment when they were endeavouring to push their fortune among the wealthy quaker magnates of the land, such an exhibition of their daughter must be fatal. And this was certainly the feeling which induced them both, without further consultation, to leave the theatre, that they might themselves be as little as possible identified with her.

My unfortunate heroine suffered her common-sense to get the better of her anger at this critical moment, and suddenly ceasing her ejaculations, prepared herself to follow her husband's advice, and leave the box.

It was, as has been already stated, the front seat of this box that they occupied, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby had deposited her shawl on the cushion in front of it. As she took hold of this shawl for the purpose of drawing it away, she became sensible that a hand, or some other impediment, prevented its yielding to her pull, which she then rendered rather more powerful, but in vain, the shawl yielded not, and the major, who perceived this, immediately bent forward, with a hasty movement, to discover who or what it was which thus delayed the exit that he so impatiently desired.

This movement of his was accompanied by one precisely similar on the part of his wife, and thus at the same instant they both perceived the black and yellow physiognomy of their noble son-in-law turned up to greet them, while a flute, which he held in the hand not occupied by the shawl, informed them, by its very intelligible hieroglyphic, why and wherefore it was that he had taken his place in the orchestra of the Chesnut-street Theatre. There was not the slightest mixture of doubt or fear in the expression of the features thus turned up towards them; on the contrary, the Don had probably never met the eyes of his parents-in-law with an aspect so entirely free from both. He seemed to think it was a moment of common triumph to them all; and after having looked at them both with a congratulating grin, he turned his head towards the stage just as Patty was pronouncing, with a very majestic wave of the right arm—

Your father was ever virtuous—

and kissing the tips of his fingers, waved the caressing salutation towards her, and pronounced the word "Bravo!" as if involuntarily, but with a degree of unction that drew many eyes upon him. Infinitely provoked at this very unnecessary additional annoyance, the major jerked the shawl very unceremoniously from his fingers, and muttering "Come along, for heaven's sake!" to his wife, hurried out of the box.

Not one syllable was spoken by the major between the theatre and the boarding-house, a species of moody silence which appeared to produce a very imposing effect on his wife; for though she was well nigh bursting with impatience to speak of what had occurred, she produced no sounds more articulate than sighs and groans, to

they were fairly concealed from all eyes and ears, in the retirement of their own apartment.

"How many of your boasted five hundred dollars, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, do you expect to get from your quaker friends after this?" said the major, throwing himself into an arm-chair, and freely using the refreshing friction of his silk handkerchief upon his heated brow.

"Not a single cent of it, Major Allen Barnaby, if the broad-brims find it out. But we must be quick, my dear, quick as thought. You will do what you like, of course; but this is what I should propose. Let us sit watching here till the Williamses return. I have heard them say that they are never late. The moment I hear them enter their room I will go to them. No! I don't think I could stand that either. The steady look of her light gray eyes always disconcerts me. I'll write, major, that's what I'll do. I will write to him."

"And pray, my dear, if I may be so bold," he replied, with something like a sneer, "what do you mean to say?"

"You shall see, major, you shall see; of course I won't send it if you should disapprove."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby said she would be quick, and she was so. In a very short space of time she put the following lines into the hands of her husband:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have received a letter from a friend of mine at Washington, who is aware of the object which brought me to this country, informing me that one of those dreadful scenes of abomination, the sale by auction of negro slaves, is to take place there on the 15th. If I start by the five o'clock boat to-morrow morning, I shall be in time to witness this, and I feel certain that a description of it written on the spot will do more towards impressing my readers with the emotions I wish to inspire, than any other particular upon which I could employ my pen. You know, my dear sir, from the entire unreserve with which I have explained to you my situation, how I am circumstanced at this moment with respect to money, and will therefore fully comprehend of what great importance it will be to me that I should receive the subscription you have raised for me *to-night*. Should you, my dear sir, have failed in obtaining for me the contingent advantage we talked of in case of an extended sale of my work, I will consent, under the peculiar pressure of the moment, to dispose of my interest in it altogether, for the five hundred dollars that have been offered me. This sacrifice will be vexatious, but I feel that I ought to submit to it, rather than fail to be the eyewitness of a scene which is calculated to throw so much striking odium upon the system that my soul abhors. I await your reply to this with very anxious impatience. If it be favourable, I shall feel myself ever bound to you, and shall proceed with renovated zeal and courage in my enter-

prise; but if otherwise, I fear I must abandon it altogether, as my excellent, but, on this point, mistaken husband, declares that his duty as aide-de-camp and private secretary to the Duke of Wellington, will render it impossible for him to indulge me by prolonging much further his absence from home. I remain, dear sir, with the most lively sense of your benevolent kindness, your faithful,

"Humble servant,
"MARTHA ALLEN BARNABY."

Major Allen Barnaby, who really was very proud of his wife, read this epistle twice over with a very approving smile, and then said—

"I should be puzzled to improve it, my dear, I promise you. But there is one doubt suggests itself, my Barnaby. What think you would be likely to happen if this broad-brimmed Jonathan should chance to know that no such sale as thee talks of is going to take place?"

"Thee need not alarm theeself," she replied in the same tone; "I am too old a soldier to hazard the success of a stratagem by any such risk." And extending her hand to the other side of the table, at which she had been writing, she took up a newspaper, and handed it to him, pointing out the particular passage she wished him to peruse.

This was an advertisement of the sale she had mentioned in her letter, and which, by great good luck, she remembered to have read, when she certainly had little thought of turning it to such good account.

"Good! Capital!" exclaimed Major Allen Barnaby, with much energy. "If you do but get these five hundred dollars, my dear, I shall not care *that* (snapping his fingers) for Patty's foolish frolic. I hate this place, and all the people in it, and shall be heartily glad to get away from it, I promise you. Not but what I shall be devilishly provoked if these two fools, Tornozino and his wife, are the cause of your losing the reward of your cleverness, which you most certainly will do if your beloved John and Rachel hear of it."

"They are perfectly welcome to hear of it to-morrow at breakfast time, Donny," returned my heroine, folding and sealing her letter. "And now ring the bell."

The major obeyed, Ariadne appeared, and the important letter was despatched.

On such occasions every moment seems an age; nevertheless, the answer arrived so speedily, that it was received with the word "already!" pronounced in rather tremulous accents by Mrs. Allen Barnaby. But no sooner had her fingers touched the envelope, than hope took the place of fear, for the packet had evidently more than one inclosure, and the moment after, hope gave way before certainty; for on opening the said packet, two bills for two hundred

and fifty dollars each fell out of it, together with a short letter and a long paper within it. The letter ran thus :—

"Thee art right, friend Barnaby, in wishing to see with thine own eyes the actual sale by auction of our unhappy fellow-creatures. For this cause I am ready and willing to hasten the business between us to its conclusion; wherefore I send thee five hundred dollars, together with duplicate engagements from the bookseller, by the which thee wilt perceive that an ultimate interest in thy work is secured to thee. If thee wilt sign one of these papers and send it back, the business will be settled between us for the present. When thy work shall be ready for publication, thee mayest send it directed to John Williams, Philadelphia, and then I will promise thee to be watchful and faithful for thy interests, and take care that when the costs of publication, together with the advance, shall be liquidated by the profits arising therefrom, thy stipulated share of all such profits as shall accrue afterwards, shall be punctually forwarded to thy address.

"Fare thee well,

"From thy friend,

"JOHN WILLIAMS.

"*Post Scriptum.* The black servant, Ariadne, has orders to wait for the agreement to which thee art to affix thy signature."

Having read this letter through, Mrs. Allen Barnaby placed it in the hands of her husband, with an expressive "hem;" and then with a sort of gentle sigh, as if things might have been better with her, she took up the two bills and placed them in a purse, which she drew from her pocket; after which she cast her eyes over the duplicate engagements, signed one of them, placed it in the hands of Ariadne, and dismissed her.

There was a good deal of genuine fun in the look with which the major contemplated his lady as the door closed, and they found themselves again alone. My heroine, for the first moment or two, ventured not to utter any articulate sound in return, but pursed up her mouth, and twinkled her eyes. But as she listened to the retreating steps of Ariadne, she took courage and ventured to say—

"I told you I would be quick, Major Allen Barnaby, and I hope you think that I have kept my word?"

"My dear, you are an angel," was his satisfactory reply; adding, however, "but for all that, my Barnaby, I feel as if we were sitting upon a mine. Just fancy their hearing that your daughter was a strolling-player, and your son-in-law first flute in the orchestra!"

"They may hear *that*, Donny, or anything else within the reach either of truth or invention, as soon as we are beyond reach of hearing *them*, and that we shall be, my dear, before they all meet

breakfast to-morrow; till then, I think, our secret may be considered as safe."

The major agreed that this was certainly probable, and at once, without indulging any more in speculation on the subject, they both set to work upon the necessary business of the final packing and had very satisfactorily completed all they had to do in that respect, when Don Tornorino and his lady knocked at the chamber-door.

It had been previously agreed between the angry parents that the present was no time for remonstrance or reproach, and all that was uttered of either was contained in the information that after the appearance, in public, it would be impossible for any of them to remain in the city, that everything they could themselves do in the way of preparing for departure, had been already done, and that the Don and his wife, instead of retiring to rest, must immediately set about the same work for themselves, unless, indeed, they had made such terms with the manager of the company they had joined, as might enable them to support themselves without her assistance—in which case they certainly need not trouble themselves about preparing for removal.

Patty clapped her hands and burst into a loud laugh, but her husband stood aghast, and expressed by his countenance every species of humility and repentance, that the most severe parents could desire. He knew, though his madcap wife did not, that his agreement with the manager consisted solely in having obtained permission for himself and his wife to appear—his lady on the stage, and himself in the orchestra. The result of which experiment had been, that the musical part of the establishment had declared that they could not and would not play with Don Tornorino, for that was a damnation bore to be told every other minute that they were playing out of time, an accusation which, whether just or unjust, they being, one and all, native free-born Americans, were very likely to take in good part; so that, in fact, he had brought nothing with him nothing but his *congé*. His handsome wife, however, had had somewhat better success, having received sundry words of applause when she appeared in the clerk's dress; which, say truth, became her extremely well, so much so, indeed, that the manager had announced a repetition of the piece for another week of the current week, which had been very favourably received. All the clapping and thumping part of the audience.

This convinced the Don at once that his lady was a theatrical success, and while she was in the act of exchanging the much-rid clerk's dress for her usual habiliments, he made his way to the presence of the manager, and stating the necessity for an immediate decision, requested to know what terms Madame Tornorino and himself might hope for. What the answer was in his case has been already stated, but in that of his lady it was less decisive.

"Your wife, monseer, has no more notion of acting than a possum," said the manager; "but I expect, too, that she is a considerable fine young woman, and therefore I shall have no objection to engage with her for a reasonable salary, if *she* has no objection to stick to the boys' parts."

Tornorino's only reply was a request to be made acquainted with the gentleman's notion of a reasonable salary.

The amount named might, with economy, have sufficed to keep Patty in silk stockings and pumps; and although this, when communicated to the beauty, had appeared to her the very perfection of independence, her more experienced spouse knew better, and became quite aware of the disagreeable fact that he and his fair bride had still no resource to look to for their daily bread, but the well-guarded pocket-book of the major.

No wonder, therefore, that the gentle hint now given by that gentleman, signifying that if Patty chose to continue her public career, she must choose also to live by it, threw him into a state of agitation, which, for a moment, robbed him of all power of protesting against this terrible sentence.

But, while her terrified husband was struggling for breath, Patty was well enough disposed to answer in his stead.

"Pack up!" she exclaimed. "Capital notion that, Mr. Pap, for a first-rate actress, who is so much the fashion, as to be obliged to repeat the part with only two days' interval. Pack up, indeed! I shall just pack up when the rest of the ladies at the theatre do, and not one minute before, you may depend upon it."

"It is settled then, Patty," said the major, looking frowningly enough, between anger and sorrow. "No more need be said about it, so I wish you good night. We leave this place at five o'clock to-morrow morning, so I suppose there is no great chance of our meeting again."

"Then you are a fool for your pains, papa, and a bit of a brute too, I must say, not to stay and witness the success, and the fashion, and the fame of your only child. Much you must love me to be sure, mustn't you?"

The major felt at that moment that he did love her, notwithstanding all her saucy impertinence; and, feeling a little of the paternal vanity of which his fair daughter thought he ought to feel a great deal, he turned to his son-in-law, and said—

"Does she mean to tell me, Tornorino, that her playing was successful?"

"Santa Maria, no!" cried the Don, suddenly recovering his voice. "Dear sar, it was a capriccio of your beautiful daughter; to her I can refuse no ting—no ting in the whole world. And so I, like a fool bête, let her try. But it not do, sar, it not do at all. Dey offers her so little bit money as not keep her pretty beauty alive. We go pack, we go pack, this very moment, belle Pati."

"What an abominable sneak you are, Don!" cried Patty.

colouring through her theatrical rouge like scarlet. "I do despise you from the very bottom of my heart; and if I do pack up, it shall be just on purpose to leave you behind, so put that in your pipe and smoke it, you poor cowardly fellow, that's afraid of being scolded by papa. You don't deserve such a wife as I am, that you won't, and if I keep my present my mind, you shall never have me again. Smoke that too, Mr. Don."

"Hush, hush, Patty," said the major, "you are behaving a great deal worse than the Don, I promise you. It is lucky for you that he has come to his senses before we have left you to starve, which I give you my word and honour we should have done, if he had not been more reasonable than you are. Get away with you, foolish girl, do! You may kiss me if you will, and part friends, on condition that you never take any such nonsense into your hirligig of a head again. If it was not for your mother's uncommon cleverness, we should have got into a terrible scrape, I promise you, and have found ourselves just five hundred dollars the poorer for your frolic."

"Make me believe that, if you can," cried the incorrigible Patty, turning away without giving the slightest indication of tending to grant the invited kiss. "I shall just go to bed, for I am as tired as a dog, and if my sneaking Don chooses to pack up, I may, but I'd see him hanged ten times before I'd do it."

And with these tender words, very pointedly addressed to the woe of her heart, the young beauty made her exit, brushing with an air of defiance by her mother, who, on her part, felt greatly too angry to speak without betraying more warmth than she thought prudent to display, as she by no means wished to attract the attention of any of their quaker neighbours to their room at that articular moment.

Flattering himself that there was no immediate danger that he and his gentle helpmate should be thrust out from the snug shelter of the parental wing, the Don wisely abstained from any further display of deprecating eloquence, and followed his wife, bowing respectfully to "pap and mam" as he passed.

Both the major and his lady were, in every sense of the phrase, wide awake on the following morning at a very early hour, and while the gentleman sallied forth to secure the services of a porter to convey their luggage to the steamboat, the lady, notwithstanding her wrath, condescended to visit the apartment of her daughter to ascertain if she too, with her less guilty husband, were ready for departure. Instead of this, however, she found both the Don and his lady profoundly asleep, and even when she had removed this impediment to their activity, by shaking them both heartily, she and the mortification of hearing Patty declare, in her most contumacious tone, that whether it were early or late, she did not care a straw, and that she would have her sleep out if Old Nick himself came to shake her. It is probable that Mrs. Allen Barnaby might

have tried the effect of more effective measures still, had she not, at the very moment that her daughter thus expressed herself, fancied that she heard the door, inclosing the apartments of John and Rachel Williams, open. The possibility of their having heard of Patty's theatrical exhibition last night, and of their coming upon her for obtaining money under false pretences, as they now appeared under circumstances totally different from what they had represented, occurred to her with such force, that she instantly resolved to leave the house, wait for the return of her husband in the street, and make him escort her on board the steambost before he removed their trunks, or paid any further attention to their contumacious daughter. The project could not, of course, be communicated either to the already snoring Patty, or her only half-awake husband; but, as she withdrew from the bed, she said, with sufficient emphasis to attract the attention of the drowsy Don—

“We are going to leave the house directly—but if you will stay in it you must.”

She then left the room, and was on the pavement of the street in pursuit of the major, before her alarmed son-in-law had fully accomplished the difficult task of waking his wife. The look-out service of my heroine did not last long, for she had scarcely closed the house-door behind her before she saw the major approaching.

“The quakers are all on the alert this morning, and I have heard the door of the Williamses open and shut,” she said, as soon as he was within reach of a safe whisper, for the black lad who followed him with a truck made any louder communication dangerous. “I have got the five hundred dollars in my pocket, Donny,” she added, in the same cautious tone, “and *my* opinion is, that I and the dollars too, will be a great deal safer out of the house than in it.”

“Egad! I am afraid so, upon my soul, if the Williamses are really stirring, for their movements are as regular as those of the clock on the staircase,” returned the major, knitting his brows with a look of considerable anxiety. “A pretty business we shall have made of it, to be sure, if they have really found out this mad trick of Patty's, and choose to blow up a riot and expose us to the whole town. Not to mention the loss of the money, which of course we must give back if they choose to declare that we introduced ourselves under false colours, or we shall have the devil and all to do, with the police at our heels.”

“I'll see every man, woman, and child of them, black, white, and yellow, slaves and free-borns, old and young, rich and poor, at the bottom of the sea before I'll give back a single farthing of the money,” returned Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a degree of animation which would certainly have startled the black porter had he been *within* hearing; but the major had prudently ordered him to go *on* to the house, and wait in the hall till he came.

He, therefore, listened to this vehement reply without any feeling of displeasure or alarm, and even expressed his perfect approbation of the sentiments she expressed, adding, very gently, that he only feared her noble daring might eventually lead her into a scrape.

"Don't talk nonsense, Donny," was the prompt reply. "If I am once safely stowed on board the *Lady Washington* steamer I will bet my five hundred dollars to your gold snuffbox that I shall reach New York just as safely, my dear, as you reached Philadelphia. And if they were to lay hands upon me, what have they got to accuse me of, I should like to know? Have I not made over to them a legal claim to all the profits that shall accrue from my work? Have I manifested by word, act, or deed, the very slightest intention of swerving from my bargain?"

"All true, my dear. But why then do you feel it necessary to run away in such a hurry?"

"Merely to avoid the disagreeable necessity, if that gray tabby-cat, Rachel, *should* come and clutch me with her sly, velvet-like claws, and beg me civilly to return the money, because the Society of Friends don't approve acting people, of saying in reply I won't."

"True again, my Barnaby, you are a trump; and no one, whether king, queen, knave, or ace, need be ashamed to bow before you. You wish, then, to go on board instantly?" said the major.

"Yes," she replied, "instantly. It will look more respectable, you know, for you just to hand me on deck, and then you may be back in a moment, and see to the moving of everything. As to those silly fools, Patty and her husband, I believe they are still in bed, for I could not make them get up; but you must not wait for them, mind. Just give Tornorino money enough to come by the next boat."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby was politely handed on board without further loss of time by her observant husband, who immediately hurried back according to her instructions, and manfully assisted in removing his own and his lady's baggage from their room to the truck. As he mounted the stairs with his assistant black porter for the last load he encountered Ariadne, who was evidently moving down with a very eager step to find him. She bore in her hand a neat-looking little note, addressed to Mistress Allen Barnaby; and for an instant he was about to open it, the excellent terms on which he lived with his admirable wife fully justifying such a liberty. Yet had he done so he would most unquestionably have proved himself for ever unworthy of possessing such treasures as herself and her confidence; but happily a ray from her own spirit seemed suddenly to flash across him.

"Mrs. Allen Barnaby is gone," said he very composedly to the black help, "but I shall join her again very soon, and will take care to give her this note the moment I see her."

"But friend Rachel, and friend John too, wanted an answer immediately," said Ariadne; "massa best read it own self."

"That is never done in our country," replied the major, solemnly shaking his head, "and you may tell friend John and friend Rachel that I say so. But I will keep it for her very carefully."

And so saying, he demurely took out his pocket-book, and placed the note in one of its pockets. Ariadne, notwithstanding her freedom, could venture no further remonstrance, and returning with this answer to the apartment of the quakers, would probably have brought a second and a personal application from John Williams, had he not been still in bed. He instantly, however, began investing himself in such garments as were necessary for making his appearance, and nothing but the vigorous activity of the major prevented his having to undergo an interview which would certainly have been very far from agreeable. Most fortunately, however, upon his opening the door of Tornorino's room, in order to toes into it the dollars which his wife had desired him to leave with the offending young couple, he met the Don coming forth with his own portmanteau on his shoulder, and that of his wife dragging after him with his disengaged hand, while Patty herself, though looking as black as a thunder-cloud, followed behind him, bringing a huge carpet-bag.

"This fellow will help you," said the major, pointing to the grinning black porter. "I cannot stay an instant, and you had better not. Follow this black fellow and his truck to the wharf."

These words, which were spoken as the major descended the stairs, sufficed to frighten Patty a little, and her husband a good deal. Not a moment was lost. The remaining trunks were partly carried and partly kicked down stairs, the noble hands of the Don disdained not to assist in placing them on the truck, and the convoy was just under way as John Williams stepped forth from his own room-door upon the stairs. Had he not stepped back for his stick he must have overtaken it; but this delay gave time to turn the corner, and when he stepped forth into the street not a single living object was to be seen, save a very hungry-looking little cur, which at that moment was passing the steps, and which on seeing him trotted up them, looking piteously in his face.

"Poor beast! Thee art homeless!" said the kind-hearted man, stopping back into the hall, and calling to Ariadne, who was passing it, for "a plate of broken victuals for a poor dog."

He again looked up the street and down the street, for any passenger who might be able to tell him if he had met a party going to the steamboat with some luggage. But nobody was to be seen, the long and handsome street being vacant from end to end.

"And what matters it?" soliloquised the quaker, as he again retreated into the house. "I do believe that the whole set are not much better than they should be, but I would rather feed a hungry dog any day, than catch and scourge a vicious one. But my Rachel was right. There is no doubt about that."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE embarkation of the whole party, the lingering Tornorinos, and their baggage included, had very much the air of a regular escapade. All the men, women, and children around them, however, were too completely occupied by their own concerns to bestow any great attention upon those till the bustle was over, and the "Lady Washington" steambot fairly under way.

As the steam hissed and the paddles played, Mrs. Allen Barnaby smiled, rejoicing with no common joy at being thus *quitte pour la peur* of an interview with her dear friend John Williams. His letter, however, was still unopened and still to be read, and the major gently hinted that it might, perhaps, be as well to look at it, just for the sake of civility, though of course, going at the rate they did, its contents could signify but little, as all that was at all important in the negotiation between them had been completed by her receiving the dollars, and there could be no danger of their being overtaken in time to undo it. However, the major and his lady retired to an unoccupied spot upon the deck, where, the letter being opened, and lovingly held between them, they read together the following words:—

"FRIEND BARNABY,—Thee hast not, it may be, intended to leceive us; but, whether intending it or not, thou hast done so. It may be that in thine eyes, and in those of thy people, the young men and women who minister to the pleasures of the worldly, by exhibiting themselves upon the stage, are in no way rendered unfit to associate with such persons as Rachel Williams; but it is not so with us. Neither should I, nor those who act with me, be well pleased to purchase the co-operation of a female, who permits her young daughter to appear clothed in man's attire before the eyes of our fellow-citizens. Wherefore, friend Barnaby, I do require of thee to restore unto me the money which I have unwarily put into thy hands, and be advised by me, for thy own good, to abstain henceforth from intermeddling or intermixing with the Society of Friends, for the which thy habits and opinions render thee in no way suitable. Thee mayest return the notes by the steady female who will deliver this into thy hands; or I will call upon thee to receive the same, as soon as thee shalt be stirring, and ready to see me.

"I remain thy friend,

"JOHN WILLIAMS."

The major looked down upon the merry upturned face of his wife with so comical a leer that it made her laugh outright, in

which gay humour he joined very cordially for a minute or two, and then, recovering his gravity, said, very demurely—

“ Well, my dear, what do you wish to do about it? ”

“ Wish? ” she replied in the same tone, “ why, my dear, I wish he may get it. ” To which piece of facetiousness she added, “ and I wish, also, that the fishes may come in for their share of this very profitable transaction. ”

And then, suiting the action to the word, she withdrew the letter from her husband's hand, and, tearing it into very little bits, dropped it by sundry instalments into the waves, which their rapid movement caused to froth and foam as it hurried past them.

Their passage to New York was agreeable in every way. The weather was fine, the sea calm, the breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, abundant, and their spirits very considerably above par. Even Patty was in a good humour, notwithstanding her forced exit, for she was amusing herself by arranging lots of schemes for the future, by which she and her beautiful Don might emancipate themselves from the tyranny of the “ old fogrums, ” and return to what it was very evident must in the end secure them very large fortunes, as well as fun for everlasting. The terror into which the Don himself had been thrown, by what he perfectly well knew was a positive failure, rendered the sort of tacit forgiveness and restoration to favour which he had found at the hands of his august parents-in-law very like a return to paradise. His precious Patty had never yet known what it was to be hungry without having the means of satisfying the craving; but he had, and this made a very remarkable difference in the value they respectively set upon the paternal protection. However, he by this time knew his beloved too well to risk the harmony which at present existed between them, by venturing to hint at any such dull realities, and continued to listen to her plots and plans, her hopes and wishes, her intentions and resolves, with an approving smile that rendered anything like a dispute impossible.

At length the beautiful commercial metropolis of the western world was reached. The beams of the setting sun danced over the waves which, however sheltered from the winds, were for ever and ever agitated by the oars, the paddles, and the keels of ceaseless industry, and the whole scene was so animated, and so brilliant, that even the languid Tornorino exclaimed—

“ *N'est-ce pas beau, Patti!* ”

Our amiable and sociable travellers had, as usual, contrived to make acquaintance with some of their fellow-passengers, and by dint of answering all questions readily, and with a judicious mixture of admiration of the glorious country, and insinuations of their own high station in the humble little island from whence they came, their progress from the Battery to the most fashionable house in Broadway was marshalled by two members of congress and a senator, who all seemed anxious to testify their good-will towards strangers so every way respectable.

On reaching the boarding-house no questions were asked out recommendations; they entered with Mr. Crop, Mr. Griskin, and Mr. Fad. This was recommendation enough, for besides their legislative honours, Mr. Crop was a general merchant in an enormous way of business, Mr. Griskin a partner in seventeen banks in different towns of the Union, and Mr. Fad the editor of three newspapers, and nine other weekly or monthly periodicals, all which he thought might benefit by intimate association with so general and well-informed a traveller as the major had already proved himself to be. A few words from each of the distinguished gentlemen, whispered in a little side parlour to the head of the establishment, were sufficient to procure for our wanderers the very best rooms vacant in the house, as well as every other boarding-house attention, calculated to make them feel, in the native phrase, quite at home."

It was not, however, till the following day that my heroine and her daughter burst upon the large party domesticated at Broadway house in full splendour, and then they were immediately acknowledged by all the company as a pair of the most first-rate females that had appeared from the old country for a long spell. It was, indeed, a prodigious relief to Mrs. Allen Barnaby to find herself released from the Quaker restraint which she had submitted to at Philadelphia, and she certainly made the most of the opportunity now offered of showing off her "nice things," as well as her nice self. Patty was, as usual, exceedingly brilliant; and as no city of the known world sets a higher value upon fine dresses than New York, the result of this display was extremely satisfactory.

"A person *must* be somebody, to wear such a velvet and such lace as Mrs. Allen Barnaby," was the acute observation of one lady.

"And it was impossible a mere nobody could wear such richness as Madame Tornorino for a mere ordinary dinner-party at a boarding-house," said another.

The estimate formed of the major and his son-in-law was usually favourable; the former being pronounced to be about the best pattern of an Englishman that had been sent out; and the son declared to be, especially by the ladies, a perfect model of a man, particularly as to his "*whiskers*."

The agreeable impressions thus produced by the appearance and manners of the strangers led to a proposition in favour of the major and the Don, which was by no means usual at an American board-table. Instead of dispersing here, there, and everywhere, as on as the operation of eating was over, the gentlemen of the party gathered round the new comers, as the ladies left the room, and villy proposed that they should take their cigars together, either with wine or spirits, as might be most agreeable to the "*Europæans*."

The proposition was of course as amiably received as made, for *man ever saw* Major Allen Barnaby decline so favourable an

opportunity of making himself acquainted with the statistics of any new region into which his eventful life might have led him. Whatever the major did on such occasions of course the Don did also; so that in a very few minutes after the table was cleared of the meats, and the room of the ladies, a knot of seven gentlemen were snugly drawn together at the upper part of the board, with spirits, sugar, water, wine, cigars, tobacco, and whatever else such a party were likely to require for the purpose of making themselves comfortable.

Now this was exceedingly frank and hospitable—that is to say, nationally, not individually, hospitable; for of course every man was to pay his own expenses on the occasion. But, as far as it went, it rather exceeded the usual bounds of civility manifested under similar circumstances. Every effect, however, has a cause, and so had this. Perhaps there is no city upon the earth to which, in proportion to its size, so great a number of speculative adventurers resort, as New York. Every man, therefore, who appears there, without introductions announcing his avowed and specific object, naturally becomes an object of curiosity if not of suspicion. If the stranger so arriving be evidently a poor man, his poverty acts as a wet blanket upon this curiosity, and he is left to himself; at any rate no more notice is taken of him than that manifested by the hundred and one questions as to who, what, whence, why, and whither, to which all new comers are naturally subjected in a country so desirous of general information as the United States. But where a party is seen to display so glittering an exterior as that exhibited by the Allen Barnaby race, the sensation produced is very considerable; and such a hospitable manœuvre as that above described, is likely enough to be resorted to, in order to elicit the real object of their crossing the Atlantic, besides that of looking at “the most glorious country under the sun.”

Major Allen Barnaby was not “that soft,” as the Yankees express it, to feel the slightest doubt as to the cause of the amiable eagerness with which his acquaintance appeared to be sought, and while in the very act of bowing his acquiescence to the agreeable proposal, he made up his mind to turn the cross-examination to account.

“Capital claret that, and capital whisky this,” said the beloved of our heroine, as he imbibed the first sip of the favourite mixture, by which a single glass of claret all round was followed. “What a glorious country this is, gentlemen! Cross the Atlantic to visit it! Upon my soul, though I am no longer so young as I was, I should think nothing of sailing a dozen times round the world in the regular Captain Cook style only to get a look at it.”

“We do count it a pretty considerable fine country, sir,” replied a senior member of the boarding-house mess; “and I must say that I expect the nation is gaining ground among the Europeans, for a precious sight of ‘em steam over nowadays to give us

a l
wi
ca
go
nc
nrfi
th
us
is
n
ie
hi
t
c

ok. But I dubiate, a good deal, Major Barnaby, sir, if they any of them become sufficiently availed of the real original cause of our unequalled prosperity and advancement, to do much in the old worn-out country when they get back again. It is that easy to reform fundamental mischief, sir, as a considerable number of your countrymen seem to suppose."

"Reform! sir," exclaimed Major Allen Barnaby, snapping his fingers; "I scorn the word. I scorn it as I am sure, gentlemen, that you must all scorn it in your hearts. What has it done for

Nothing, absolutely nothing. It is not reform we want, it is evolution. Has our boasted reform brought us one inch nearer to the constitution of the United States of America? That is the question I ask, and let any one give a favourable answer if he can."

"Why for that matter," said one of the legislative gentlemen, in reply, "I expect you must still pocket the affront of being told that the government of England is as far behind the government of America, as your Virginia Water is to our Niagara. It don't do to talk of them together, sir. You'll excuse me, but it's no manner of use to draw a parallel. The superiority on our side is so much, as to make it not any way a civil subject of discourse between us."

"I appreciate your delicacy, sir," replied the major, with a sigh. "However, in my case," he added, "it is, I am happy to say, less necessary than in that of most other persons. For the sake of peace, I am determined to shake off the yoke."

Major Allen Barnaby would not have arrived at the age of fifty-five years with so much prosperity as we know he had done, if he had not possessed a considerable portion of that ready tact which distinguishes a man, and a woman too, to discover if what they utter produces the effect they wish.

The major, on the present occasion, perceived in an instant, that a glance was sent round from eye to eye, that seemed to say, "What does that mean?" and with equal rapidity of thought, he recollected that many English subjects who had "thrown off the yoke" had done so not solely to enjoy the happiness of visiting the republic, but because their little monarchy have given hints that they had had enough of them. But he corrected this trifling remark admirably.

"Take it off!" he said, with a deep sigh. "Alas! gentlemen, it is more easily said than done. To a man in my position I know that the doing this effectually is impossible. I have property in England, landed property, unfortunately, and I don't intend to turn beggar as well as republican, I cannot at present turn my back upon the country where it lies."

His speech was now accompanied by a satisfactory sort of smile that seemed to say, "All's right."

"An unhandsome predicament," said one of the members

of congress. "But at any rate, sir, before you go back again to your poor, tumble-down, old place, you may gratify yourself by listening to a little first-rate eloquence in congress, which is what not many of your nation is capable of enjoying, seeing that, naturally enough, as I think you will allow, we most times take the freedom of expressing our thoughts concerning the old country, and now and then we can't but see that if any English is present, they wince a little under the lash. However, with you, sir, as it seems, the case will be altogether different; for it is clear to see, you would not mind seeing the old lady, our great-grandmother, as the young folks call her, get a box in the ear."

"Not the least in the world, sir, I do assure you," replied Major Allen Barnaby, with a laugh. "You may knock her about exactly as much as you like, I promise you I shall never interfere to protect her."

The major then launched out on the theory of government, and exerted himself to the utmost to prove his entire conviction that the republican form was the only one to which any reasonable man would willingly submit himself; but a good deal to his surprise, he found that all his new acquaintance began to yawn, and display symptoms, more or less equivocal, of finding his conversation exceedingly tiresome.

Major Allen Barnaby was not a man easily induced to doubt his own powers when he chose to exert them, and yet he could not but suspect now that there must be some deficiency of warmth and vigour in his eloquence: and being exceeding anxious to inspire, if possible, a little of the ardent sort of admiration which had rewarded his lady's exertion in the south, he started off anew, taking the glorious and immortal Washington for his theme, and protesting that his code, and his only, was that to which regenerated Europe would henceforward be willing to submit herself. But again his audience yawned, and it is possible that the expression of his countenance was indicative of surprise, mortification, or both; for the gentleman who sat immediately opposite to him said, with a funny sort of smile—

"You must not take it ill, Major Barnaby, sir, if you don't find us New Yorkers overmuch given to reason about principles, and politics, and all that sort of thing; for to say the truth, there is not one of us cares a button about it, from first to last. You mentioned just now, sir, that you had made for New Orleans when you crossed. And there now, they will talk about principles, and the rights of ownership, and the natural difference between free-borns and slaves, from July to eternity; but the thing is quite different here. We don't care a cent about *principles*, having quite enough to do, looking after *principal*. Do you bite, sir? That's the reason why you do not find us altogether so much taken with your very good and esteemable notions as we otherwise might be. But perhaps, sir, you are not yourself at all in the mercantile line? and

in that case I expect you'll find that you are considerably thrown out among us."

"Not mercantile, my dear sir?" returned the major; "you are altogether mistaken in that supposition, I do assure you. Few men have speculated more largely or more variously than myself; and I am at this very moment looking out for a good opportunity of investing a tolerably large sum of money in any concern in this country that is satisfactorily established, and promises tolerably well."

People talk of the brilliant effect of a sudden burst of sunshine upon a landscape, and it is certainly very striking; but what is it when compared to that produced by this last sentence of Major Allen Barnaby? Every eye kindled; every head was brought forward; every ear seemed to erect itself; every nostril to expand, as if game were afoot, and each living creature there instantly straining upon the slips to pursue it.

The clever major saw that he had made a hit, and immediately assumed a quiet, meditative air, as if the subject touched him too nearly to permit its being lightly discussed. He no longer continued to be the principal speaker as before, but stirred his hot toddy, and appeared more inclined to hear than to be heard.

But there was no longer any danger that the conversation should flag. First, the gentleman next him on the right-hand began to open upon the subject of banks, by a leading observation muttered in his ear; and then the gentleman to the left said decisively, as he began mixing a second tumbler, "Part ownership in a good vessel well engaged and well manned, is out and out the best venture going;" while a third, from another point, hemmed aloud in order to command attention, and then pronounced with all the dignity of a lawgiver (which indeed he was), that there were shares now on sale in a canal that he could mention, a deal surer in the way of property than the Bank of England, and bringing a certain return of from twenty to thirty per cent. instead of three; adding, with an intelligent nod of the head, "I should be happy to talk with you a little, sir, on that subject, whenever you happen to be at leisure."

The major now, in an extremely short space of time, felt that he knew his company as well as if he had passed a year with them, and cleverly enough did he contrive to propitiate them all. Not a word they uttered seemed lost upon him; nay, if two or three of them spoke together, he still contrived by some grimace or other to make each one believe that he was the individual to whom, if the other gentleman would permit it, he most desired to listen.

All this answered very well, as far as it went, but it was rather dull work, too, for the major to go on talking for an hour together about dollars and dollars, and yet never once to hear the exhilarating words, bet or stake. However, he knew perfectly well that there were more ways than one by which a man of genius might

turn his wit to profit, and the sitting broke up at last with precisely the sort of speeches, about being happy to make his acquaintance, which he desired to receive. And make his acquaintance in some way or other, he was quite determined they should, though he felt that it would require rather more time than at New Orleans to decide in what way it might be done with the best chance of conducing to the one great end he ever had in view.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Mrs. ALLEN BARNABY, meanwhile, did not absolutely lose her time, for she talked to everybody who would listen to her, about her house in Curzon-street, and going to court, and holding something very like a court at home, and, in short, she did her own honours with the greatest possible perseverance and energy. Her success, however, if not altogether equivocal, was at best but various; the New York ladies, even those who occasionally take a "spell of boarding," are considerably "ahead" of such of their southern sisters as have not traversed the Atlantic; and though the velvets and satins did a good deal towards standing in the place of introductions, they did not do quite so much as she expected.

My observant heroine, too, now found the difference between addressing herself to a master passion and letting it alone. Had she presented as presents to her new companions some of her most precious and transferable articles of finery, instead of merely displaying them, it is possible that she might have advanced more rapidly in their good graces; inasmuch as it has been repeatedly asserted by analytical-minded travellers, that the master-passion of the majority of fair ones at New York is dress; but no such expedient suggested itself either to Mrs. Allen Barnaby or her daughter. The latter, indeed, had by no means permanently recovered her good humour, still considering herself as one of the most cruelly-treated specimens of human genius on record, and believing firmly, and hinting plainly, that nothing but her mother's jealous envy of the fame that awaited her, had caused her being thus violently withdrawn from the profession she had embraced with so much enthusiasm.

My heroine, on the contrary, with that fine buoyancy of spirits which ever distinguished her, suffered not herself to be depressed in the slightest degree by discovering that for the time being she was not likely to make any particular use or profit from the folks around her. Instead of yielding to any such useless and enervating weakness, she recapitulated clearly and distinctly in her well-trained and able mind, the various sources of solid profit which she

and her spouse between them had contrived to find on a soil rather more famed for acquiring money than for yielding it. The sum total of these successes was respectable in amount, and the time consumed by the acquirement of it, comparatively short; wherefore she very reasonably determined to make use of the unavoidable interval of exertion, which now seemed to have occurred, by enjoying herself without repining or regret.

The major, meanwhile, was more than usually silent as to the nature of his occupations, but gave her to understand every morning, when they separated after breakfast, that she would not see him again till they met at dinner; and in like manner, when the company left the dinner-table, he just found time to say, "Don't expect me till you see me, my dear," and no more. Night and morning, indeed, when in the retirement of their own apartment, the wife asked, and the husband answered, many questions. But though she questioned "with the boldness of a wife," and he answered with even more than the usual courtesy of a husband, the chief information given and received, consisted in the fact that he had as yet no intelligence to communicate sufficiently definite to make it worth while to talk about it.

"Then I suppose, major," she replied, "we may all amuse ourselves as we like, till you give orders for right-about wheel?"

"Exactly so, my charming wife," he answered, gaily. "I am just spying here, and peeping there, and listening everywhere, to find out if anything is to be made of these New Yorkers. If there is, I'll let you know, my dear; and maybe we'll draw up here, and take breath a little before we go any further. If not, we'll be off in double quick time, you may depend upon it."

"That is just as it should be, Donny," said she.

"I trust everything most implicitly to you," said he, "and feel no anxiety whatever, my dear, in leaving you entirely to yourself."

"Just tell me, Donny, will you," she rejoined, "how much do you pay a head for us here, by the week?"

"What makes you ask, my dear? Do you want to be economical, and go somewhere else in the hope of finding it cheaper?" said he.

"No, indeed, major," she replied, briskly; "I have no such stingy notions in my head, I promise you. Why should I? I am sure that altogether we have done most uncommonly well since we came here; and you know of old, that I am one of those who think money, like everything else, is just worth as much as it will bring. So don't fancy that I want to creep into a hole, and get half starved and half poisoned, in order to save a few dollars, while my purse is as full as it is just at present. That's not what I am thinking of; but I'll tell you what it is. As long as you go on engaged for everlasting, out of the house, I see no good reason why *Fanny* and *I* should stay in it, if we can amuse ourselves better elsewhere; and

my belief is, that we might go to the springs at Saratoga just as cheap as staying here. As far as I am concerned, I am quite sure there's nothing to be got in the way of profit out of any of the people I am likely to make acquaintance with here, and not much, between you and I, in the way of amusement. So if you'll just shovel out as many dollars as would clear Patty, Tornorino, and me, for a fortnight in this house, we'll just bundle ourselves off to the Springs, Donny, and if we find anything going on there in your way, my dear, I'll take care to write and let you know."

"And a very good plan to, my Barnaby," replied the major, nodding his head approvingly. "I can't quite tell yet whether I shall screw anything, in any way, out of the queer chaps here. At any rate it won't be in the old way if I do, and so you may take Tornorino with you and welcome."

"That's all right then," replied my heroine, "for Madame Patty would never have been contented without him. But why, I should like to know," she added, with a coaxing sort of smile, "are you grown so monstrously mysterious, my dear? Whether you have any thoughts of standing for president, or whether you expect that you'll talk them into making you commander-in-chief of their army, if they happen to have one, I have no more notion than the child unborn. You never used to be so very, very cautious before, Donny."

"Upon my soul it is no caution, wife, but wholly and solely because I have nothing to tell you, that I tell you nothing. These chaps are the queerest folks you ever saw in your life, my Barnaby, there is no making out what they want to be at. From the moment I gave them to understand (which I did in a very easy off-hand sort of way) that I had ready money with me, they have been hanging about me like wasps round a honey-comb, and it is as clear as the sun at noonday that they both hope and expect to get something out of me; but I shall be surprised if they do. Shan't you, my dear?"

"I think I should be a little disappointed, Donny," replied his wife, with a pretty complimentary bow. "But it seems to me a sad loss of time, my dear, to stay here, just taking care of yourself, and nothing more. I confess," she added, "that I don't see, from what you now say, any very good reason why we should not all start together. There is always something going on, you know, at watering places, and whether it is little or much, it must be better than nothing, or than just watching to see which way these land sharks mean to set about grabbing at you, merely for the pleasure of disappointing them."

"Why yes, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, if that were quite all, I should be perfectly of your opinion," replied the major. "But I cannot help thinking that if they once fairly set about diddling me, as we call it, I should somehow or other be able to turn the tables on them."

"Well," she returned, "I dare say you know best, major, and therefore I most certainly shall not think of arguing the point with you. What say you then, my dear, to our giving notice to-day that we three mean to be gone when the current week is up?"

"Why, my dear," he replied, "I say that I think it is the best thing you can do."

The matter being thus amicably settled between them, the projected plan was put into execution without delay or difficulty of any kind, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with her daughter and son-in-law, set off for the springs of Saratoga, their European finery being recruited by some of the most striking articles that New York could furnish, and their spirits in that happy state of excitement which arises from the consciousness of having nothing but amusement as an occupation, and nothing but whim as a master.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AMONG the *gentlemen* who, on the first day of Major Allen Barnaby's dining at New York had pressed round him with civilities of all kinds, and offers of commercial aid and assistance in particular, in whatever speculation might attract his attention, there were two who stuck to him very much more closely than the rest. These two gentlemen, Mr. Crop and Mr. Fad, who had been amongst his earliest acquaintance on board the steamboat from Philadelphia, and who had paid a good deal of attention to the abundant baggage of the European travellers, had not only listened with very particular attention indeed to everything that had fallen from the free-spoken major concerning the ready money he had brought out with him, but had even contrived to discover completely to their satisfaction that it had not come in the questionable form of bills of credit, the very name of which is peculiarly disagreeable to American ears, but *bonâ fide* in specie, convertible at five minutes' notice into the dollars upon which their heart doted. The major was fully aware of the peculiar pertinacity of these attractions, and was quite as much awake to the fact of their having some particular object in view in bestowing them, as they could possibly be themselves. But far from experiencing any jealous suspicions concerning their motives, or any feeling of alarm lest any of the much celebrated Yankee tricks should be played off against him, he wished for nothing so much as a fair trial of skill. He knew that it would not be made in the same style, or with the same weapons to which he had hitherto been the most accustomed; but, either from natural generosity of temper, or a noble confidence in his own innate strength, which he knew would render him

R.

match for most men, let them attack him in what manner they would, either from one or both of these considerations, he waited with no small degree of impatience for the opening of the campaign. It will be seen, therefore, that his statement to his wife was in every respect the most candid and sincere possible, and that he really told her nothing, solely because he had nothing to tell. Hitherto he had waited with great patience for some hint of their hopes or wishes, and he was fully determined to wait with equally great patience for some time longer, although it is certain that, either from family attachment, a love of change, or the pleasant thoughts suggested by the idea of a watering-place, he did not see the gay-looking trio set off without feeling a very considerable inclination to accompany them. Still, however, he went on for three days longer drinking toddy and smoking cigars with Messrs. Crop and Foul, without committing himself by any initiative movement, and still the conversation at each sitting began and ended by general declarations on the part of the native gentlemen, that capital, if properly applied by those who know how to make the most of it, might just now be turned to tarnation good account; and by responses on that of the foreigner, that he held the funds he had brought with him quite ready for any investment that promised a profitable return, but that of course he should look for good security.

How long this sort of coquetting might have gone on, had nothing occurred to quicken the movements on either side, it is impossible to say, but the following letter spurred the sides of the major's intent so effectually, as to set the machinery he had to deal with, very speedily in motion:—

“MY DEAR MAJOR,—This place is glorious, and unless you soon tell me of some very brilliant and successful *coup de main* performed at New York, I shall continue to think, as I do at present, that you are losing your time there most abominably. The springs, they say, were never so full. It was as much as ever we could do to get two decent bedrooms, and I can't boast much of their cheapness; however, that would not signify, you know, if you were here, Donny, exerting yourself a little. And that you might do, early and late, I can tell you, for I hear the billiard-balls clicking the very first thing when I open my window in the morning, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, they go on all night. Nor is that by any means all that is going on here, I promise you. We have got as thorough-going a set of card-players as ever I saw, that are always left hard at it in the great saloon, when all the rest of the company go to bed. I can't, of course, pretend exactly to say what the stakes are, but instead of their nasty silver money, I observe they write on bits of paper and give one another, and I know, of old, that you always count that a good sign. Now does not all this make you long, my dear Donny, to reunite yourself to your beloved

family? However, I won't plague you about coming, if you think it wisest to stay where you are, for I not only give you credit for being as attentive and thoughtful in all matters of this kind as it is possible for a man to be, but I am also modest enough to believe, that you are likely to know best whether you ought to come here, or whether you ought not.

"As to Patty, she grows handsomer and more dashing and elegant in her style and manner every day. It is a thousand pities, to be sure, that she should be tied up to that Lackpenny Tornorino, for I do think she might have had the pick of the market, go where she would. However, what can't be cured must be endured. Our nice things in the way of dress are a great help to us, I can see that plainly. Such peeping and peering at our French collars and lace. Tornorino, too, looks exceedingly well, always dressed to the life, I promise you, and I can't but say, in excuse for Miss Patty, that he looks quite the man of fashion; so that altogether our party is not to be sneezed at, and I must say that, take us one and all, I think we are the most stylish set here. This can't but be an advantage to you, Donny, if you should take it into your head to come before the season is over. But now I must say good-by, for Patty is storming at me with her beautiful pink feathers all flying about like wild, as she tosses her handsome head, because I am not ready to set off for the public walk. Once more I say, come if you can; and always, dear Donny, here, there, and everywhere, believe me to be your affectionate wife,

"MARTHA ALLEN BARNABY."

This letter immediately decided the major to bring matters to the point between him and his dear friends, Messrs. Crop and Fad, if, indeed, they ever meant to come to the point at all; but at any rate he was determined to lose no more time, and if on that very afternoon he failed to discover a good chance of doing something at New York, to set off as early as possible for Saratoga.

On that very afternoon, therefore, he placed himself, as usual, opposite his new friends, as soon as the dinner-party had dispersed, and stirring his toddy very assiduously, said—

"Well, gentlemen, I think I must be off to the springs after my wife and family, for I really have been making all the inquiries I can about an investment for these few troublesome thousands, that I was foolish enough to bring out with me, and I can hear of nothing that would at all suit my views. Your enterprises and speculations here are all upon so large a scale, that five or six thousand pounds is like a drop of water in the ocean; so I have made up my mind to think no more about it; and after seeing Niagara and Boston, I mean to turn my face back again towards Europe, and content myself with some little speculation there."

Mr. Crop and Mr. Fad exchanged glances, and for a moment both of them remained silent; but at length, Mr. Crop, who was

ly far the livelier genius of the two, suddenly addressed his friend Fad in an easy and natural tone, which gave to his words the appearance of being perfectly unpremeditated.

"That would be a pity, I expect, wouldn't it, Fad? I, for one, should be right down sorry to see good solid capital marched out of such a country as this, where it would be sure to bring a good ten or fifteen per cent. if it was made the most of."

"I expect it would," answered Fad, shaking his head, and looking quite sorry.

"Think again, Major Allen Barnaby, sir," resumed Crop, "and in the course of to-morrow morning, I calculate I might hit upon something or other quite in the ready money line of business that might suit. I could have done it before, easy enough, I make no doubt, only, truth to speak, I didn't know you were so much in earnest, or at any rate so much in a hurry."

"Why, after all, you know, Mr. Crop," said the major, smiling, "that the disposition of a few thousands is not likely to be an object of very first-rate importance to me, and that as my family all seem exceedingly well pleased at the springs, it is natural enough that I should feel well disposed to join them. However, I have not the least objection to wait over to-morrow, but if you do not in the course of the forenoon favour me with some sort of information a little more definite than any which you have hitherto given me, I really do not think you can blame me for leaving the city, without giving any further thought to the chances of finding a favourable investment here."

"No, sir, no blame whatever. In course you will be after doing in that respect whatever may happen to be most agreeable to yourself," said Mr. Crop, with great civility, and then added, "At present, to be sure, we only seem to be talking for talking's sake, that I must confess. What say you, Fad, to look in at the Bowery?" he added with an air of indifference.

This proposition seemed to be well relished by Mr. Fad, and the two gentlemen departed together, leaving the major to amuse himself again, as he had repeatedly done before since his arrival, by getting a little picking at chicken-billiards at some of the (comparatively speaking) harmless tables of the commercial city.

"Well, Fad," said his friend Crop, as arm in arm they sauntered off together, "I really think you must consent to expedite matters a little. I expect, my fine fellow, that it can make no great difference to you whether you are declared bankrupt two months hence or six?"

"I expect not much," replied Fad, gaily. "The fact is, that I have a notion my lady is dubitating whether she shan't take a house and give a ball, and I was calculating, you see, that it might be more profitable to give it before than after, on account of clearing off expenses."

"Why so it might, I expect, a trifle; but nothing comparable

to what we should both lose if we should suffer this chap to escape," replied Mr. Crop; "and as to time, though I would be the last man in the world to vex dear Mrs. Fad by disappointing her about her ball, the whole business will take so little time to get through, that I don't consider it will signify a cent to her, one way or the other. The smash will be over, and you up again, and as good a man as ever, before the winter season is over."

"Oh dear, yes, I know that perfectly well," replied Fad; "I am that much used to it, like the most of us, that I don't mind it the value of that," snapping his fingers, "and, therefore, I'm your man, either for drawing or backing, or anything you like."

"That will do, then," replied Crop; "if you are ready, the job is, and I won't say but what I shall enjoy it, for it's plain to see that this gay London officer fancies himself a devilish deal sharper than anybody as he is likely to meet with here. The very fact of his bringing his money out here to speculate with proves that fact. Don't you see, Fad? If he did not think us that soft that he could take some advantage or other of us, d'ye think he would have taken the trouble to steam out here for the sake of investing his thousands? Not he, take my word for it. He thinks to do us, Mr. Fad, and we'll just see, once and away, if we can't do him."

"Oh! but you forget, Crop," rejoined Fad, with a roguish sort of wink, "you forget the gentleman's political principles. Don't you know that he is come out here out of pure love for our constitution?"

"All that's very well when there's no money in the case, Mr. Washington Fad," replied the candid republican; "but the moment a man mixes up any question of money with his politics, I know, and so we do all, I expect, pretty considerably well on this side of the Atlantic, which is the substance and which is the shadow."

"You may say that, Mr. Jefferson Crop," returned his friend, laughing; "but by the Stars and the Stripes, you must not waste any more time in being witty, for if I am to put things in train, to declare myself bankrupt in two months, I must be tarnation active to-day, to-morrow, and the day after, I calculate, and therefore I must begin by begging you to go over the whole transaction, as it is to be done and performed for our mutual profit and advantage."

"I have got it all as clear in my head as rock crystal," said Mr. Crop, "and I expect he'll do his part of it as gentle as a lamb. At our next meeting I'll tell him that you have got an unaccountable good opportunity of buying your wife's brother's share of a fine property in Ohio, but that for a few months you must borrow a few thousand dollars, for which you are willing to give good interest."

"Why you don't mean to come upon him smack with a proposal to borrow his money, do you?" said Fad, shaking his head; "that will never do."

"I expect not, Mr. Fad. I should like to know whereabouts you think I was hatched? However, here we are at the Bowery—I'll explain it all when we come out. Our path is as straight before us as the Broadway."

With these words Mr. Crop pushed open the spring-doors of the theatre, and entered followed by his friend.

On the following morning Major Allen Barnaby had the pleasure of finding his new friend, Mr. Crop, better than his word, for instead of keeping him waiting till noon for the intelligence he had only half promised to obtain for him, he took him aside when they met at breakfast, for the purpose of saying that he had now got an opportunity, in a little way, of showing him what sort of interest might be obtained for money at New York, by those who thought it worth their while to look about for it; and then he proposed a walk on the Battery, to give them a leisurely and quiet interval for explanation. Major Allen Barnaby readily agreed to accompany him, and they set off together, Mr. Fad excusing himself from joining the party on account of business elsewhere.

"You must not fancy, sir," said the American, as soon as they found themselves on one of the quiet walks of the beautiful promenade they had sought, "you must not fancy, major, that I have been lucky enough to hit upon any grand and great speculation for you—no such thing. That would require a little more time than you have allowed me, I expect. But I shall just be able to show you, that I have not been talking of what I did not understand when I spoke to you of the rate of interest in New York. Without disbursing a single cent of your capital, you may get at the rate of twenty per cent. for only accepting a bill of Fad's. I'll let him have the money with all the pleasure in life, for I know my man, and instead of ten thousand dollars, I'd be happy and proud to lend him fifty thousand. But one does not get such a chance as that in a hurry. Fad wants the money all on a hop, you see, to purchase his wife's brother's share of a fine property in Ohio, that must be sold by auction out and out, directly, because the father, you see, is dead. Upon these ten thousand dollars, you and I shall make a pretty trifle each by dividing the interest, though it's only for a few months. But that's the way we do business in New York. What do you say to it, Major Allen Barnaby?"

"Why, I cannot but feel greatly obliged to you, sir, for letting me share this profitable trifle with you," replied the major. "But if you know Mr. Fad so well, as being himself a perfectly responsible person, why should you require an endorsement?"

"As far as I'm concerned," returned Crop, "I would not give a single levy for it. But it is the custom, you know. The fact is, that the monied men of New York have made it a sort of law, expressly for the purpose of turning a few thousand dollars in the year by just signing their names."

"Ay, ay, I see, I understand," said the major, looking perfectly

satisfied, "and I shall be quite ready to give my name for the consideration you mention—which I presume is paid in advance."

"Certainly, major, it is always paid in advance," said Crop. "But you must see Fad, of course, and settle all about it with him; and perhaps when the bill is drawn and endorsed, you may as well hand it over to me at my counting-house yourself, for the interest is a little sharpish even for New York, and I see no good to any of us in putting the transaction before the eyes of anybody but the parties concerned. I'll tell Fad that you will be with him in an hour, shall I?"

"If you please, sir; I will not fail to be punctual," returned the major; and after receiving a card with Mr. Fad's commercial address, he returned to the boarding-house and employed himself upon some little jobs that he had to do in his own room till it was time to set off again to keep his appointment.

When Major Allen Barnaby reached the counting-house of Mr. Fad, he found that gentleman seated there alone in the enjoyment of a solitary cigar, with a considerable mass of papers, ledgers, and account-books, ranged on the table before him.

"Your servant, Major Allen Barnaby," he said, as the gentleman entered. "You are punctual, sir, and that's the very soul of business. I often say that I have made as much money by my punctuality, as by my knowledge of business, and that is setting my value for it considerable high, I expect. Pray be seated, sir."

The major accepted the invitation, and immediately entered upon the business that brought him there, observing that their friend Mr. Crop had promised to be ready at his own counting-house to complete the transaction forthwith.

"I know he will," returned Fad. "Crop is one of the best fellows that ever lived; he knows that it is an object with me to be ready to step in with my money immediately, as there is a chance that I may lose the bargain if I don't, and I should reckon that a good three thousand out of my pocket, considering the pretty bit of property that I have got next lot to it. And now, sir, here is pen and paper all ready—shall I draw and you accept? or you draw and I back it?"

"I'll draw it, if you will," replied the major, carelessly.

The materials for doing so were placed before him and he began to write.

"I can't say much in praise of your pens, Mr. Fad," he said, first trying one and then another of those that stood in the ink-stand before him. "Perhaps, sir," he added, "you would be kind enough to give a touch to one of them with your penknife? We Englishmen, Mr. Fad, are natty about our pens, and I confess I like to write my name legibly, whether for ten thousand dollars or ten thousand pounds."

Mr. Fad instantly started up and retreated with a quill to the window, saying—

"If you are natty in using pens, Major Allen Barnaby, we count ourselves natty in making them. If you'll wait one minute, sir, you shall have one fit to imitate copper-plate." And he set himself assiduously to the task of turning a goose-quill into a pen.

"Don't trouble yourself, Mr. Fad," said the major, when the pen was about half made, "I have found one that will do exceedingly well. Now then, sir, have the kindness to endorse it without losing time, for I have promised Mr. Griekin to cross to Hoboken with him before dinner, and it is as much as I shall be able to do to bring the money to you here, and then get to the ferry by the time we agreed upon."

"I will not detain you an instant, my dear sir," cried Mr. Fad, hastening back to the table, where the major, who had completed his part of the business, was employed in carefully pressing the bill on a sheet of blotting-paper, holding in his hand another morsel of the same material in readiness for the endorsement, that no time might be lost, yet no danger of blotting ensue.

"You will be here, Mr. Fad?" said the major, carefully folding up the bill, and placing it in his pocket-book. "I must beg that you won't go till I return, for I shall by no means choose to cross the ferry with all this money about me."

"I think I told you, my dear sir, that I could not leave the office till my clerk came back. You may depend upon finding me."

Having received this assurance, our friend posted off with all speed to the counting-house of his other new acquaintance, whom he found sitting alone, much in the same style as he had found Mr. Fad. After being again complimented on his punctuality, the major said—

"I suppose you and Mr. Fad understand one another, sir, and therefore I have drawn this bill here according to his instructions, though the sum is double what you named to me."

The first words of this speech caused Mr. Crop to start, slightly, but the conclusion not only chased the feeling of alarm to which the opening had given rise, but produced a well-pleased though involuntary smile, which spoke, as plainly as a smile could speak, that the alteration mentioned was anything rather than disagreeable.

Neither the start nor the smile were lost upon the observant major, and he, too, would have smiled in his turn had he not thought it more advisable to look grave.

"There, sir," he added, laying down a bill drawn by him on Mr. Fad for twenty thousand dollars, and bearing that honourable gentleman's acceptance on the back of it.

"There, sir, is the bill, according to the request of your friend, for twenty thousand dollars instead of ten, an increased accommodation to him, to which, he said, you had agreed."

"Quite right, sir—quite true," replied Mr. Crop, applying

self as he spoke to an iron strong box, which stood ready on the
; "I told him, as I believe I told you, that I should not have
 slightest objection to advance him fifty thousand if he wanted
 I won't say," he continued, "but what I should have tried to
 e a better bargain for my friend Fad if I had known in the
 instance, when I opened the business to you, that the sum
 ld have been so large. It's getting a pretty sum considerable
 , I expect, Major Allen Barnaby."

"Very true, sir," replied the major, rather drily; "had it been
 wise, I certainly should not have accepted the proposal at all,
 I detest trouble."

While this was passing, Mr. Crop continued drawing a heap
 lirty American bank paper from his strong box till the sum of
 nty thousand dollars was laid before Major Allen Barnaby, who
 ented the bill to Mr. Crop in return for it, and then took his
 e, saying, "I have promised Mr. Fad to return with the money
 ntly, so I must wish you good morning."

"Good morning, sir, good morning," returned the civil Mr.
 p, attending him politely to the door; and so parted those two
 ht specimens of the old world and the new. But in this
 ance, at least, if in no other, the Englishman proved by far the
 st accomplished knave of the two, at least if success be taken
 proof of superiority; for the well-timed bankruptcy of the
 ellent Mr. Fad, which was, of course, to throw the whole
 ossibility on our friend, had no more power to prevent the
 ting of the active major than it had to prevent his drawing
 nty thousand dollars instead of ten. In short, the Englishman
 ved himself the harder and sharper diamond of the two.

The major kept his promise very punctually to the eagerly-
 ectant Mr. Fad, paying over to him ten thousand dollars of the
 n he had received, but, changing his mind as to his project of
 iting the pleasant shades of Hoboken, he immediately returned
 the boarding-house, accompanied by a porter, to whose truck
 consigned all the remaining baggage of the party, having taken
 before he made his last exit, to leave it all in a state ready
 moval.

ut let it not be supposed for a moment that Major Allen
 aby meant to make a clandestine escape from his quarters;
 e contrary, he took the most handsome and honourable leave
 ole of the master of the establishment, paying him rather
 than a week in advance, and expressing the most flattering
 t at being thus suddenly obliged to leave a residence he had
 eatly enjoyed, and a city he had so greatly admired, in con-
 nce of a letter just received from his daughter, announcing
 ainful intelligence that his beloved wife had been suddenly
 ill and wished him to rejoin her instantly.

r. Perring, of the boarding-house, received both the dollar
 he farewell with great politeness, and in less than a quart

of an hour afterwards, the major, his trunks, and his pocket-book, were on board the *Atalanta* steamboat, bound to Albany, to which place he very audibly told the porter he was going in the hearing of one white and one black domestic at the boarding-house.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

To Albany, however, Major Allen Barnaby had no more intention of going than to Jericho. Instead of committing any such folly, he very deliberately went on shore at the spot from whence he could most conveniently reach the Springs which his amiable family honoured with their presence, and arriving there late in the evening, spent the interval between that hour and morning in getting his party ready to set off. Nobody, however, who had seen him figuring away at the supper-table as a first-rate European man of fashion, would have guessed the real state of the case. Nobody would have fancied, that, unless he had contrived to take himself off faster than the dear friends he had left could follow him, he would, in all human probability, have been exposed to a very disagreeable explanation. He was in high spirits, charmingly affectionate in manner to the dear creatures he had rejoined, and altogether so extremely agreeable, that the party at the *table d'hôte* very much regretted to find that his stay was to be so vexatiously short.

Before the company retired to their respective apartments for the night, Major Allen Barnaby took his son-in-law aside, and inviting him to a moonlight promenade in the front of the hotel, made him by a few words comprehend the nature of the circumstances which rendered an immediate ramble westward desirable. The Don showed no want of quickness in his manner of receiving this intelligence, and promised, with a greater appearance of courage than was quite usual with him, that he would take care his *Pati* should be ready.

This point settled, the gentlemen returned to the house, and soon afterwards my heroine and her spouse were *tête-à-tête* together.

It was the lady who spoke first.

"What in the world does all this mean, major?" said she, looking a little as if she intended to be out of temper. "I should like to know, if you please, what reason you can possibly have for insisting upon paying everything to-night, just as if we had not another hour to stay here?"

"You have several hours more to stay here, my dear, and I hope you will pass some of them in sleeping soundly. But my reason

for wishing to pay everything here, honestly, to-night is, that I mean to go away very early to-morrow morning."

"Good heavens! how tiresome you are," exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with a flash of the eye that showed her to be very heartily provoked. "Just as we have got acquainted with ever so many agreeable people, and made ourselves perfectly comfortable, you come down upon us with your tyrannical '*I must*,' which just means 'I will,' and *presto*, everything must be packed up in a moment, and off we must go, just as if Patty, and I, and Tornorino, were so many blind puppies that you amused yourself by carrying about with you in a hamper."

"Blind, my dearest love!" exclaimed the major; "you really wrong me very much; nothing I can assure you can be further from my inclination than even leaving you in the dark for an hour, and much less, my Barnaby, would I have you blind. Listen to me for a very few minutes, fair wife, and I will shed light enough upon the business to make you see just as clearly as I do myself."

"Some more of your pretty gambling exploits, I'll be bound for it," exclaimed the lady, with a very ominous frown.

"Not so, my love," he replied, with great gentleness; "I really have not had the good fortune of being able to win as much money by gambling since you left me as would excite suspicion in a lynx. But if you expect, my beloved Barnaby, that I am to make ten thousand dollars in half an hour, by any manoeuvre to which I should choose to invite all New York to be present while it is performed, and that, moreover, I should stand to be cross-examined by them afterwards, if you expect this, my charming wife, you overrate my abilities."

"Ten thousand dollars!!!" exclaimed my heroine, with eyes and hands raised towards the ceiling. "Ten thousand dollars! What are you talking about?"

"I am talking, my dear, of the sum which I last inserted within the leather folds of my pocket-book," replied the major, demurely. "The which sum, although in very dirty American bank-notes, I would willingly submit to your ocular examination, my dear, were it not that I feel the moments to be rather precious, and that I am aware you must have a good deal to do in order to be ready to start by the stage at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"You don't mean to say that you have really done some of those smoking fellows out of ten thousand dollars, and then set off exactly in the way they would be sure to follow? Oh, major! major! we shall be caught at last! How could you be so mad as to come here?"

"Chiefly, my dear, because I was quite sure that it was the very last place that they would *calculate* I should be likely to come to. And secondly, because I wished to have the honour and happiness of attending you and our charming daughter on the pleasant little

circuitous tour, which I intend making westward through this glorious and unequalled country."

"I do believe you are mad, major," said his lady, looking a good deal mystified, and rather uncomfortable. "If I did not know by experience, that drink what you will, you never get really tipsy, I should certainly think you were so now."

"Then you would be greatly mistaken, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," he replied. "I confess this little adventure has put me in good spirits, and makes me appear, perhaps, rather more frolicsome than ordinary, but you may trust me, my dear, my vivacity shall not bring you into any scrape whatever, nor myself either. So set about packing up, and there's a good woman, and then we will contrive to get a little sleep, if we can."

"And Patty?" exclaimed my heroine, suddenly stopping in the midst of the obedient bustle into which she had thrown herself amongst her bags and boxes; "how on earth are we to get her out of bed by five o'clock in the morning? to say nothing at all of getting her luggage ready! Shall I go to her, major, and try to frighten her into obedience?"

"Go on with what you are about, my dear," replied her husband, very composedly, endeavouring, as he spoke, to assist in some of the needful packing operations; "I have taken care of that. Tornorino knows all about it, and he has engaged for their both being ready, and their trunks too."

"But, major," again exclaimed his wife, and again suspending her activity while she asked the question, "how is it possible you can be so perfectly at ease as you seem to be, when you have come off with such a sum as that? What in the world should prevent their setting off after you? Hush! what noise is that? Mercy on me! What a scene it would make if they were actually to follow you in here, like a felon and a thief, and carry you to gaol before my eyes!"

"Don't torment yourself by any such fancies, my dear," he replied. "Take care how you put in that beautiful velvet. That's the dress that you look the best in, and of course I have a particular value for it."

"But, major," persisted his wife, after giving to the precious robe all the care it demanded, "what would become of us if these people should follow you here, and actually get you put in prison?"

Seeing, at length, that these anxious doubts and fears did very seriously impede the packing process, the major condescended to calm his lady's tender anxieties by saying—

"Be contented, wife, when I tell you that there is no law in the land that can trouble me for the next two months, and I must truly be in every way unworthy the happiness of possessing you for my wife, were I fool enough not to get out of their way by that time."

his neck and tenderly kissed him, exclaiming as she returned to her employment—

“Excuse me, dearest Donny, but my heart was full to overflowing! You are a noble creature, and not to love you is impossible!”

* * * *

At the hour appointed on the following morning the major and his lady, the Don and his, together with all their travelling appendages, were safely stowed in a stage that was journeying westward, and there, for the present, we must leave them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Nothing could exceed the pleasant hilarity of Major Allen Barnaby's spirits, when he found himself once more on board a steamboat, careering westward on the bosom of Lake Erie, at the rate of twelve knots an hour, his pocket-book crammed with bank-notes, and nobody whom he had left behind him having any more right or reason to guess whither he was bound, than he had to guess which way the wind would be likely to blow on the morrow. And how should they, since he did not know himself? His lady, who had been informed with the most perfect conjugal confidence of the real state of his finances, was under the influence of the same delightful harmony of spirits as himself; and though the Don and Patty were by no means admitted to the inmost recesses of the precious source from whence all this felicity sprung, they both of them had sufficient acuteness to feel quite sure that all was going right in the money department, and that such being the case, they would be likely, sooner or later, to come in for their share of the joke also.

“They may be as secret as they will, Tornorino,” said Patty, as she watched her father and mother laughing vehemently on the further side of the deck; “but if I don't get some of the cream of the jest, and that's the money, never trust me more. And I'll tell you what, my Don,” she continued, creeping very close to him, “never let you or I say another word to either of them about our acting. As to papa, he is a doting old fool, and has worked himself into a desperate fright for fear I should leave him, that's the English of his objections; but as for mamma, I can see as far into a mill-stone as she can, maybe, and all the fuss she makes about it, is just from jealousy and nothing else. I do think she is the vainest old soul that ever walked the earth; and the notion of my going to be stared at, and admired, where she can never hope for her-

to show her old face, is altogether more than she can bear ; and so there now, the murder's out, as far as she is concerned."

"Mais c'est bête, mais bête," exclaimed Tornorino ; " for de old lady to hope herself belle comme sa fille !"

"That's all right and true," returned his clever wife, who besides having made great progress in various other branches of human learning, was beginning to understand very tolerably her husband's composite language. "But we must manage, my dear, to do something more than just to find out that de old lady is a goose, we must find out also how to feather her gay gosling's nest. And this must be the scheme, darling. Whenever papa is in the sort of humour we see him now, we must coax and coax, till we get something out of him, and by degrees, if we save it all up, we may be able to hoard enough for a frolic, as the folks here would call it, and then be off, my darling ; see if we won't, and they may just wait till we want a little more before they get another chance of seeing our two handsome faces again."

Whether the accomplished Tornorino exactly agreed with his lovely lady in this view of what would be wisest for the future, it is impossible to say, because he cautiously avoided expressing any opinion on the subject, and confined his answer to a fond caress, which was, at least, as far removed from expressing contradiction as acquiescence ; but the pretty Patty was perfectly satisfied, and insisted not on any further explanation, but presently proposed that they should join their gay parents, in order to begin the coaxing process with as little delay as possible.

"How I do love to see you laugh, my own dear papa," said Patty, passing her arm within that of her father as he leaned over the side of the ship. "May I ask what it is about ? You know, pap, that I love to laugh too."

"It was just about nothing at all, Patty ; or, at any rate, the joke was one that you would not understand, for it had something to do with business, and I am sure you know nothing about that, do you, darling ?" said her loving father.

"Why I know this much, papa," replied the fond daughter, looking lovingly up in his face, "I know that when people look so monstrously pleased when they are talking about business, it is a sure sign that they have been making money by it. What do you say to that, pap ? Don't you think I am right ?"

"You are so far right, Patty, that nobody, I suspect, would be very likely to be found laughing when they were discussing business by which they had *lost* money," replied the major, demurely.

"True as true, darling pap!" rejoined his daughter, looking very intelligent ; "but my wit goes a little further than that, for I suspect that when people laugh so very heartily, they must have done something more clever than merely not losing."

"Well, Mrs. Don," replied the major, pinching her cheek, "I

ay suspect what you like, you look too handsome to be quarrelled with."

"Do I?" she cried, clapping her hands joyfully; "then I know that you can't, for your life, refuse to give one little tiny twenty dollars to buy me a new cloak and bonnet. Can you, pap? Can you refuse your own poor Patty, who has not a single cent in the wide world that she can call her own? Think of that, pap! Is it not shocking? And I your only child, too!"

"I doubt very much your wanting either bonnet or cloak, Patty," said her father, shaking his head at her; "however, I have no objection now and then, as you pretty well know, to make a fool of myself, in order to please you."

Major Allen Barnaby extracted his well-filled pocket-book from its deep receptacle in the breast of his coat as he spoke, and drawing forth four notes of five dollars each, presented them to his daughter, who received them with a joyous jump, and paid for them with a very hearty kiss.

As no individual, excepting Mrs. Allen Barnaby and Don Tororino, was near the spot on which this transfer took place, it never occurred to the parties concerned in it that any individual was privy to it, save and except themselves, and those immediately belonging to them. But in this they were mistaken. Quietly seated on a coil of rope, which was concealed from the eyes of the Barnaby race by a huge pile of portmanteaus and carpet bags, was an old long-legged Yankee lawyer, who might have been supposed, even if they had been aware of his vicinity, to have been too much occupied by the newspaper which he seemed to be reading, to have any eyes left for looking about him. Such a conjecture, however, would have been altogether erroneous; Mr. Gabriel Monkton was never so much occupied by anything, when surrounded by his fellow-creatures, as to be unable to look about him. It was by looking about him that he had made his way upwards, from a very dirty little boy, sweeping an office, to a very good-looking gentleman seated at the highest desk in it; and he was too sensible a man to leave off a profitable habit, merely because it had been of use to him; therefore, though he was now a very rich instead of a very poor man, he still continued to find out everything that happened within his reach; and, in one way or another, was pret sure to find it answer.

It needed no ghost to tell him that Major Allen Barnaby, with his full lips, and his full chest, was no American; he found it out before he had turned his quid once, after first glancing at it. And having made this discovery, he watched him, of course, more narrowly; for there is a great deal more interest, and often more profit too, in finding out the who, the why, and wherefore, concerning a foreigner than concerning a native. Then his laughter with his wife was rather of a chuckling, elephant kind, the tone of which grated a little on the

he New Englander, and suggested notions of successful trickery, r, at the very least, of successful barter.

Now, as both these branches of human industry are held by all genuine Yankees to belong to them, almost as a monopoly established by nature herself, it cannot be wondered at if Mr. Gabriel Monkton looked at Major Allen Barnaby with a jealous, if not a suspicious, eye. And then came in full view of the ensconced chawer, the blooming Patty, with her jumping and jollity, her kissing and coaxing; and then the plump pocket-book, and a very advantageous side-view of the contents of one pocket thereof. The mind of Mr. Gabriel Monkton was both analytical and logical, and he never suffered these noble faculties to lie idle on an occasion like the present.

■ He perceived that the notes thus made visible to him, were the
■ dear, darling, dirty dollar-notes, as precious to his heart as they
■ were familiar to his eyes, and which spoke their birth-place and
■ their origin in a language not to be mistaken. Ergo, this store of
■ wealth was not the travelling cash of an English Niagara visitor,
■ but must have been found, if not made, within the limits of the
■ glorious Union. As to its being the product of English bills,
■ bank-notes, or sovereigns changed for convenience into American
■ currency, that was quite out of the question; as no man, in his
■ senses, as the Yankee meditator well knew, would change English
■ money for American, if he could help it; and, therefore, the ple-
■ thoric form of the pocket-book put the matter out of all doubt.

“How, then, did the fellow get together such an accountable lot of States paper?” (not state-papers—this change in the position of a letter would have rendered the question one of utter indifference to the questioner). It was a puzzle that no unaided guessing or calculating could solve, and, therefore, delightful as were the sensations enjoyed in his present retreat, his heels being thrown considerably higher than his head, his mouth full of tobacco, and the uninterrupted spittoon around him as extensive as his heart could wish—notwithstanding all this, Mr. Gabriel Monkton manfully resolved to sacrifice the enjoyment of it for the purpose of acquiring the information his intelligent mind thirsted to obtain.

With this view he continued to watch the movements of the party till the junior couple had left the senior one, and then letting drop first one leg, and then the other, and placing his light-coloured beaver on his head in such an angle, as gave it the chance of keeping its place during the act of rising, he gave a sort of frog-like spring, and found himself once again in the much less luxurious, but much more ordinary position of a human being; in plain English, he stood upright.

The sound produced by this violent change of attitude, caused Major and Mrs. Allen Barnaby to start, and turn their heads towards him. This was lucky, for it served all the purposes of introduction.

"No offence, I hope, sir," said Mr. Gabriel Monkton, with a conciliatory sort of nod; "but I expect that I startled your lady a bit."

"Not at all, sir, I assure you," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with one of those swimming, swinging courtesies with which she never failed to honour every new acquaintance; "I am not quite so nervous as that."

"Fine day for a steam, sir," said the lawyer, having acknowledged Mrs. Allen Barnaby's civility by a bow; for Mr. Gabriel Monkton, like the majority of his countrymen (as long at least as they remain on their native soil), never addressed his conversation to a lady while there was one of the nobler sex near, "and a capital boat this, as I expect you'll allow."

"Delightful, sir! Both, both delightful. The weather and the boat too are worthy of America," returned the major, with a smile of great amenity.

"I expect you mean the United States, sir, when you say America; for we can't calculate that this whole quarter of the world can show such craft as this, to say nothing of the weather."

"Unquestionably, sir, I spoke incorrectly," returned the courteous major; "but the fact is, that the immense disproportion, in point of importance, which the nation properly denominated the United States of America, bears to the entire continent, leads Europeans to forget that the quarter of the world called America, contains anything else."

"Likely enough, sir, and in time I should not be very greatly surprised if all the civilised portion of the world was to adopt, and take upon itself the appellation of United States, owning, one and all, maybe, the federal authority of our President. There are considerable many indications, up and down the world, in many directions, that makes it look probable, we think," said Mr. Gabriel Monkton.

"I give you my honour, sir," returned the major, "that the same idea has repeatedly struck me, and for my own part I positively think it would be the salvation of mankind. Indeed, without some measure of that sort, I profess I don't see how the existence of the European nations is to be preserved."

"Why, on this side the water we are all pretty well come to the same notion, that's a fact. But you see, sir, before anything of that kind could be acted upon, we should have a good deal to do in the way of condescending to make sacrifices for the general good," returned Mr. Gabriel Monkton. "There is no denying, sir," he continued, with the modest air of a man acknowledging a weakness, "there is no denying that it is pleasant and agreeable, ay, very pleasant and agreeable, to be first and foremost of all the people of the earth. But if once we take it into our heads to make it a main object with our government that they shall gather all the nations of the world, and sit and brood over them, as I may

say, hatching them out of their present egg-like sort of imprisonment, till they all fly off like so many free-borns, if once we do this, where will our superiority be? All the world will look then to share and share alike, I calculate."

"How admirably true!" exclaimed Mrs. Allen Barnaby, clasping her hands, and turning her great eyes towards the sky. "Is it not a pleasure, major, to listen to such magnificent ideas?"

"I beg your excuse, sir, I did not know your title till your lady named it," said Mr. Gabriel Monkton. "In the English army, I presume, sir!"

"Yes, sir, that is my profession, I am a major in the army, and hold also an appointment on the staff, which I am sorry to say will not permit my being long absent from home. It is a sad punishment for an enlightened Englishman, after once finding himself in the United States, to feel that he shall be obliged to leave them again," said the major, with a sigh.

"I expect it must, sir," returned his new acquaintance.

"Then you don't calculate," he added, after pausing for a moment, "upon continuing here for the purpose of making any speculation in the mercantile line."

"No, sir, I have no idea of the kind. My duty, unfortunately, calls me elsewhere."

"Then you are only here to take a stare at us, I guess, like the rest of the world. Nobody, I expect, counts themselves right down well educated in these days without having come a few thousand miles to look at the citizens of the United States," observed Mr. Gabriel Monkton, the natural harshness of his austere countenance a good deal softened. "It is pretty considerable much of a compliment that; I don't see the way to deny it, that's a fact. And pray, major, may I ask the favour of your name?"

Major Allen Barnaby had meditated more than once since leaving New York upon the probable advantages and disadvantages of once more making some little alteration in his name; but not having fully decided upon the measure, he was now in a manner compelled to decide against it, for he instantly remembered the numerous packages which bore labels which it would not do to contradict, and he therefore answered, though perhaps with some little shadow of hesitation—

"My name, sir, is Allen Barnaby. Permit me to present to you Mrs. Allen Barnaby."

The Yankee bowed stiffly, so stiffly, indeed, that my heroine, who had rarely in the course of her eventful life found it so difficult to draw attention to herself, soon became weary of finding herself *en tiers* where she was not looked upon as a principal, and walked off to a sofa near the stern of the vessel, where two smart looking ladies were already seated, whom she flattered herself should find means of rendering more sociable than the stiff Gabriel Monkton.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Mrs. ALLEN BARNABY was not better pleased at leaving the grim-looking Mr. Gabriel Monkton, than he was at losing her company. He was not particularly fond of ladies' society at any time, and just now he thought the wife of his new acquaintance particularly in the way. No sooner was she fairly gone than he changed his tone and manner entirely, and entered at once upon the national cross-examination, to which all strangers are subjected, if intended to be noticed at all.

"And which way, I wonder, may you be travelling, sir, in order to see the most and the best of us?"

"My object at present, sir, is to see something of your magnificent lakes."

"The lakes? Yes, sir, the lakes are magnificent, unaccountable, there's no doubt of it. And where might you happen to start from last?"

"Why we have been a good while merely travelling about from place to place, in order to see everything without allowing ourselves time enough to stay very long anywhere," said the major.

"But where did you start from sir, this trip?" persisted the Yankee.

"Why positively I forget the name of the place. I have a dreadful head for names," replied the Englishman.

"Indeed! Well, then, what was the name of the last place you stopped at, that you do remember?"

"Oh! Baltimore was the last place at which we made any considerable halt. And West Point," added the major, apparently much delighted by the sudden recollection; "yes, I remember, now, we passed a fortnight at a place called West Point most delightfully."

"Indeed?" returned Mr. Gabriel Monkton, with rather a comical accent. "Then I expect that though you are from the old country you have got some relations or connections in the new one?"

"No, indeed! We have no such advantage," replied the major, "I am sure I wish we had; it would be delightful. But why, sir, should you suppose this likely?"

"Well now, in point of fact, I can't realise the notion of any one who has not got relations, either among the lads or the professors, —I can't realise, I say, any one biding at West Point a whole fortnight, because everything curious there can be seen in two or three hours," observed Mr. Gabriel Monkton.

"That is perfectly true, certainly," returned Major Allen

Barnaby, with a good-humoured smile; "but yet, somehow or other, the place had an indescribable charm for us. Perhaps it might arise from its striking resemblance to a favourite scene with which we are familiar at home."

"In the way of a military college do you mean, sir, or just in point of location?" demanded the persevering inquirer.

"Both, my dear sir, both," replied the major, readily. "I have two nephews, whom I perfectly adore, at our military establishment at Sandhurst; and this circumstance, together with the extraordinary similarity of the scenery, produced a most remarkable effect upon us all. My dear wife, who is in all respects most completely a second self to me, was inconceivably touched by the coincidence, and this it was which induced us to remain there so long."

"And what's the name of the great river, Major Allen Barnaby, what answers to our Hudson at our college? It must be pretty considerably larger, I expect, than they have set any of your rivers and streams down in the maps; at least I can't say that I have ever realised any river in England to be equal to our Hudson. What may be the name, sir, of that one that runs below your military establishment?"

"It is the Thames, sir," replied the major, boldly, "which, though not perhaps quite so large just at Sandhurst as the Hudson is at West Point, is, nevertheless, a very noble stream, as I suppose you know."

"Why, as to that, sir, everything goes by comparison," returned Mr. Gabriel Monkton; "and may I be so bold as to ask whether you found the discipline at West Point as much resembling your Sandhurst as the location does?"

"I should say, sir," returned the judicious major, "that the arrangements of all kinds at West Point were incomparably superior to ours; and though my nephews are devilish fine-looking lads, it is impossible not to allow that the American young gentlemen make altogether a much finer appearance. They carry themselves so admirably."

"Likely enough, sir," was the complacent reply. "We mostly reckon that, upon a fair comparison, and an honest judgment, the citizens of the United States *are* the finest race that Providence has, as yet, created upon the earth. And now, sir, may I take the freedom to ask which way you are going?"

"Why, upon my word, sir, I am hardly able to answer you," replied the major, with another of his frank and pleasant smiles. "The fact is, you see, sir, that we are travelling so wholly and solely for pleasure, that we took a resolution, at the very beginning to fix upon nothing, but to go just here, there, and everywhere *whim and fancy* might dictate. You may depend upon it, sir, *is the way to enjoy travelling.*"

"Well, I don't know; it may perhaps to you gentry of

country, who ain't, I expect, particular famous for knowing your own minds; but we American citizens prefer for the most part, I calculate, knowing when we set out to what place we are going," returned Mr. Gabriel Monkton, with a queer little smile.

"Then may I ask, sir, to which point of this most beautiful lake you may be bound," demanded the major, gaily, "as that perhaps may assist me in coming to a decision. I should be delighted, I assure you, in retaining the pleasure of your society as long as possible."

"The boat stops to wood, and put down, and may be take up passengers at Cleveland, and it's a place that in course, like all our towns, has its beauties and recommendations, but nevertheless it is not desirable to stop at for long, in comparison of Sandusky," was the answer.

"Then it is to Sandusky, sir, I presume that you purpose going yourself?" said the major.

"Yes, sir, to Sandusky," replied the other.

Major Allen Barnaby then politely touched his hat and walked off.

Having marked the direction which his lady had taken when she walked off before him, the major, with very proper conjugal feelings, took the same, which soon brought him in sight of the sofa where Mrs. Allen Barnaby had taken refuge, and on which she still sat, together with the two ladies whom she had found there. The excellent husband's amiable feelings in seeking her were immediately rewarded by seeing her rise from her place the moment she perceived him, and come forward to take his arm.

"Well, I have been questioned enough, I hope, for one bout," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as soon as they had moved out of hearing. "In my life I never met with such curious people as those two women."

"Then I hope you have been as cautious as they were curious, my dear?" said the major, looking a little anxious. "I have been undergoing a sharp questioning also, and my answers were calculated to give as little information as possible. I hope and trust that yours were given in the same spirit, for it would be rather suspicious if we were caught telling different stories."

"Then all we have got to hope, major, is, that your curious man, and my curious women, do not belong to the same party; for as sure as the sun's in heaven, I have answered pretty nearly the truth to every question they have asked; except, you know, just for setting oneself off a little, which of course everybody does when they are talking about themselves to strangers; one must blaze away a little then or never; but excepting trying to make them think that I was a distant relation to blood royal, or something of that sort, I give you my honour I have not told a single lie."

"Then I give you my honour, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, that you are considerably more of a fool than I gave you credit for. After all I told you at Saratoga, I do think you might have found some better theme to descant upon, than the explaining at full length

where we came from and all the rest of it," replied her husband, frowning.

"I never said a single syllable about you, my dear," replied Mrs. Allen Barnaby; "I only talked a little of our delightful season at the Springs, and I'm sure you had nothing to do with that, not even the paying for it. Besides, it's nonsense making a fuss, Donny, what's done is done. If you had any particular lies of your own that you wished me to tell, you should have said so. You know perfectly well, my dear, that I consider it quite a matter of duty in all that sort of thing, to do exactly what you desire. However, I flatter myself there is no harm done, for the chances are fifty to one that your man and my women don't belong to each other."

"Don't they?" retorted Major Allen Barnaby, in a tone much less amiable than usual. "Just look to the right, if you please."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby did look to the right, and thereupon certainly saw reason to doubt the accuracy of the opinion she had thus expressed; her fifty to one would have been a losing bet, for there stood Mr. Gabriel Monkton in the very closest converse with the two ladies she had just quitted, evidently listening to some information they were bestowing upon him with great attention; and what made this circumstance the more alarming, was that the very instant she turned her head towards them, they exchanged sinister glances, and ceased to speak.

The major was evidently much annoyed, but his usual excellent judgment prevented his indulging himself in reproaches to his admirable helpmate; on the contrary, he said to her with the same flattering air of confidence as usual—

"We have certainly got into a scrape, my Barnaby, with these confounded people, and all we can do now is to get quit of them as soon as possible. It will be best, too, not for us to seem confabulating and consulting together, so you go your way, and I'll go mine; but remember, we must both of us carry with us eyes and ears, which may be more profitably used than our tongues."

So saying, he walked away, leaving his penitent wife determined to atone for her indiscretion by keeping so sharp a look-out as might enable them to guess if any disagreeable consequences were likely to arise from her having given one account of their party, and her dearly beloved husband another.

These good resolutions were soon rewarded with the success they deserved; for upon her retiring to the ladies' cabin, and turning into one of the little beds which occasional rough weather upon this inland sea rendered necessary, she speedily found herself in the most favourable position possible for ascertaining how much mischief she had done.

On this occasion it may be observed, that the weather was peculiarly fine, and on the bosom of Lake Erie as calm and as untroubled as the gentle canal in St. James's Park. It was not, therefore

any feeling of indisposition that my heroine thus withdrew herself, drawing the muslin curtains between herself and the rest of the world, so as to prevent any chance of her being seen; on the contrary, she never was in better health, or with spirits more on the alert to catch everything which might come within reach of her ambushed ear.

Ere she had remained ten minutes in the retreat thus cleverly chosen, two young ladies entered the cabin together, one of whom she immediately discovered to be the youngest of the two curious fair ones she had encountered on the deck.

"Oh my! This is jam, Arethusa," exclaimed this pretty daughter of an ugly father, for she was in truth no less a personage than the sole heiress of Mr. Gabriel Monkton. "We shall have some capital fun this frolic. Pa and ma between 'em have come right down upon a set of Englishers, who are sailing under false colours. There never was such a man as pa, I expect, for catching out folks of this sort!"

"Well! I'm sure that if I was at the top of the tree, he should just have a statue for it," replied the animated Arethusa, adding with still greater energy, "all the English are, to my fancy, first-rate disgusting. But what is that your pa has found out this time?"

"Oh my! It is just a proper Yankee bit of cleverness, I promise you; but I can't just go it all over now, 'cause I must go up again as soon as I have fixed my curls, to help ma find out some more if she can; but I can tell you this much, that pa means to watch this major, as he calls himself, pretty close, and swears he shan't go on shore without having him at his heels. And what's to come next, I can't say, but pa will take care of that; and ma says, that she calculates upon our having the fun of seeing 'em marched off to prison. Come along, Arethusa, what a slow girl you are! I have done fixed my hair, spit-curls and all, before you have done twiddling with your collar."

The fair friends then departed, leaving Mrs. Allen Barnaby to meditate on what she had heard. She did meditate, and to some purpose too, for before she again squeezed her ample person through the all too narrow entrance to the bed on which she reposed herself, she had fully arranged the mode and the means by which she should extricate her husband from the inconvenience likely to arise from her having stated that they came from one place, while he had as positively declared they came from another.

She knew better, however, than to make her way up to the deck by the stairs leading from the ladies' cabin, which might perchance betray rather too plainly to the young beauties, who had just taken that direction, how indiscreetly they had chosen the place of their late conference.

Passing through the gentlemen's cabin, therefore, and reaching the deck at its extremity, she was presently leaning over the galley

rail at a point almost as far removed as possible from the retreat where she had so cleverly lain in ambush; and here, having for some time espied her, the cautious major at length ventured to join her.

"Well," said he, taking his place close at her side, and placing himself in an attitude that seemed to manifest great interest in the breaking of the "wavelets" against the planks of the vessel, "well, have you made any discoveries, my dear?"

"Discoveries!" she repeated, "I believe I have made discoveries. But never mind, Donny; don't agitate yourself. I'll get you out of this scrape, as cleverly as I did from that of Big-Gang Bank."

She then hastily but very intelligibly recited what she had heard, but upon his uttering a few expletives, indicative of some slight irritation of temper at the disagreeable turn the adventure seemed likely to take, she stopped him somewhat authoritatively, saying, with an uplifted finger and a flashing eye—

"Not another word, Major Allen Barnaby, in the way of reproach or complaining, or I leave you to your fate! Difficulties seem but to excite and expand my genius, and I feel the same happy confidence in my own powers, which I ever have done through every stage of my remarkable existence; but in order to enable me to put this to profit, you must give my powers full scope, major. If you will let me have my own way, and do exactly what I bid you, I'll have you on shore at Cleveland, without letting that odious scarecrow of a man know one bit about it, any more than that tall chimney there."

"Set about it, then," returned her husband, with more sharpness of tone than was usual with him, for he was in truth too thoroughly vexed at the result of her tattling communications to be at all disposed to encourage the vapouring style she had assumed. For one moment she looked at him earnestly, and seemed doubting whether she should resent his want of politeness and abandon him to his fate, or generously forgive his petulance, and again extend her helping hand to save him. The very wise second thought which suggested the impossibility of punishing the contumacious major alone, at once decided the question, and with a smile, half playful, half reproachful, she said—

"Come, come, Donny, no sour looks, if you please; only be grateful, and acknowledge as you have sometimes done before, that I am your good angel, and I will take care that you are a free man still."

"Forgive me, my Barnaby," said the again smiling major, "if I permitted myself to doubt for a moment that my cause was a safe one, if you undertook its defence. But what in the world is it that you propose to do, my dear love? I protest to you that I think *this business is a very awkward one.*"

"Not a bit of it," replied his wife, cheerily. "Pray, my "

do you think you have sufficient strength of mind to endure with tolerable composure the seeing me exceedingly ill again?"

"That expressive word, *again*, reassures me, my charming Barnaby; for it at once turns the threatened illness into an admirable jest. But do you really think, my dear, that you could put off this trick again, so as to get me free from this devilish steam-boat, without being followed by this grim Gabriel?"

"The old trick, Donny, with the assistance of a new one following it," she replied, "will, I think, suffice to do all we want. But I don't believe it is quite a new trick either, for I remember hearing something very like it before; but it is not the worse for that, you know, if it serves our turn. And now listen, and you shall know what I mean to do, and what I mean you to do. You will see me presently walking down the ladies' stairs into the little cabin; when I get there I will wash my face, you know, Donny, just as I did before, and when this is done I will crawl up again, looking very poorly indeed. And then you must help me to the sofa, and then I must lie down, and then you must go and bring Patty to me, and then I must send her to borrow one of the ladies' smelling-bottles, and then I suppose they will come to me, when I shall take care to make them understand, that heavenly beautiful as their great big lake may be, the movement of the boat on it makes me very ill. In short, I shall make everybody understand that I am determined to land at the first stopping-place, which I understand is called Cleveland."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby paused for an instant to take breath, upon which the major ventured to hint that he greatly doubted if the mere circumstance of their landing at Cleveland, instead of Sandusky, would suffice to distance Mr. Gabriel Monkton, if indeed he were as determined to track him, as the language she had overheard seemed to indicate.

A whole volume of scorn flashed from the eyes of my heroine as she listened to these words.

"You doubt it, major, do you? And to tell you the truth, my dear, I doubt it too. Depend upon it, if I thought he could be so easily put off, I should give myself no further trouble about the matter. You must hear a little more first, if you please, before you venture to decide whether my scheme will answer or not. After having clearly given these ladies to understand that I mean to land at Cleveland, I shall declare myself unable to sit up any longer, and you and Patty must help me down stairs, and lay me upon the bed. Well then, imagine us all down there as snug as possible—of course, you know as well as I do, that whenever anything happens which takes any of the ladies' husbands into the ladies' cabin, all the other females, as they call themselves, keep clear of it, as if they thought that he was a shark going to swallow them all up. We shall therefore have the cabin entirely to ourselves, and then I will dress you in my large long cloak, *petticoat*

and all that, and you shall put on my large Leghorn sun-bonnet and white lace veil, and Patty shall help you up to the deck exactly when the boat stops, which they say is just when it is getting dark. The passage and all that, you know, is paid already. Tornorino shall go with you, and if any questions are asked about 'the Major,' Patty shall say that you are going on to Sandusky, because you expect some one to meet you there on business, and that we shall travel by land under the escort of the Don to join you there. What do you say to this, major?"

"But what on earth is to become of you, my dear, if you remain here on board by yourself?" demanded the major, affectionately.

"Don't trouble yourself about me, my dear," she replied, gaily. "There's a number of shabby-looking women on board, and I mean, as soon as it gets dusk, to go up amongst them dressed quite differently from what I am now. There's that old tartan cloak, you know, will cover me up completely, and I have no doubt in the world that I shall get out of the boat with the rest of the riff-raff, without any single soul taking notice of me. You know their way of always making everybody pay at the half-way station, and that prevents anybody's being looked after, when they step on shore."

"You are perfectly right, my dear Barnaby, as to that, and I do declare that, considering the hour for landing, and all the other circumstances, I see no reason in the world why the plot should not succeed. Besides, it is your invention, you know, and that gives me confidence, for everything you do succeeds."

"Why, I must confess," she replied, "that I have rarely taken it into my head to plot and plan *without* succeeding. However, though I take credit to myself for the invention, or at any rate for the adopting it, you must please to remember, Donny, that a good deal of its success must depend upon yourself. I am quite sure that this fellow expects somehow or other to make a good thing of catching you. There are a good many queer tricks, you know, practised in this country, of one sort or another, and I take it these Yankees are up to a thing or two, as well as your friends at New Orleans. Perhaps he suspects that you have not been visiting their glorious and immortal institutions for nothing, and may hope that if he keeps you in sight for a day or two, something may turn up about you, my dear, which might make somebody or other very grateful to him for having looked after you a little."

"And that's precisely what will happen, Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as sure as your graceful and ever charming form hangs over this rail. So far you understand the circumstances of the case to perfection. But I do not exactly perceive how any exercise of *my own peculiar talents* upon this occasion, can in any way assist enabling us to avoid the catastrophe we anticipate."

"Your own peculiar talent, Donny, may have been

necessary to get you into the scrape than out of it ; nevertheless, my dear, I have sufficient confidence in your general cleverness and ability, to feel assured of your passing with more than credit, with honour, through that part of the business which must inevitably fall to your share," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby.

"And pray what part of the business may that be, my dear?" demanded the major. "If it means the walking under your garments with equal grace to yourself, I must fail ; the thing is impossible."

"Tranquillise your spirits, my love, on that point," returned the lady, with a playfully tender smile ; "nothing of the sort will be necessary. In about two hours it will be quite dark enough for you to walk as you will under my garments, without any eye being likely to perceive the difference. Your part of the acting must take place immediately. After you have left me upon the sofa with Patty listening to my groans, you must assume a very unfond and unfeeling air (foreign to your heart, my love, of course, but absolutely necessary to your circumstances), and having sought and found your agreeable new acquaintance, Mr. Gabriel Monkton, you must tell him that I am horribly sick, and then you must swagger a little about the horrid bore of travelling with women, and then you must swear that you would not miss seeing the person you are to meet at Sandusky for all the sick women in the world, but add, with some little show of softer feeling, that for all that, you are not such a brute either, as to insist upon my going on ; and then you may speak of the excellent qualities of Tornorino, and the perfect satisfaction with which you can trust me to his care, and to that of my daughter. It is in this scene, my dear major, that you must display the talent for which I give you credit. When you have performed this, you must conclude by telling him that you must intrude into the ladies' cabin in order to apprise the ladies of your party that they must land at Cleveland without you ; and then you may walk off to find us, taking care ostentatiously to proclaim as you go, your regret at the necessity which obliges you to take the liberty of entering that apartment, and taking care also that Gabriel does not lose sight of you a moment sooner than is absolutely necessary. Five minutes' retreat with Patty and me, will suffice for your toilet. You must make our good Tornorino understand his part in our little domestic drama, and school him to knock at the door of the cabin as soon as the boat reaches Cleveland. He must give you his arm through the gentlemen's cabin, the stairs from which open upon the deck close to the gangway by which they go ashore. I shall follow at some distance after, with a bundle and basket, like one of the market women ; and of course you are none of you to take any notice of me, but depend upon it I will take very good care of myself. Tornorino must set about collecting all our luggage for landing at Cleveland, and place it near the gangway. And now, Mr. Major,

what do you say to it? Do you feel competent to undertake your part?"

"I think I may venture to say that I do," he replied; "so now let us begin. Move the first, is your descending to the cabin, in order to remove that slight and unnecessary addition to your charms, which fashion, my dear love, has induced you to adopt. Go, then! and rely upon it that I shall neither mistake the order of the subsequent scenes, nor forget my cue."

Perfectly satisfied with the spirit of active obedience which she read in her clever husband's eye, she gave him an approving nod, and moved off.

CHAPTER XL.

It was impossible for Major Allen Barnaby to watch the painful languor of movement with which his charming wife withdrew from his side without admiration. Long as he had been her husband, he really did admire her exceedingly. Nor was the feeling of that light and idle kind which leads to nothing. He felt all her claim upon his ready co-operation in the scheme she had sketched out, and instantly began his share of the work by seeking Tornorino, and explaining to him both the business he had to perform, and the reason for it.

This was not a sort of business on which the graceful Don was at all likely to be dull of comprehension, and the major left him, on seeing his pale and trembling "*Barnaby*" emerge again from the ladies' cabin, quite satisfied with the ready acquiescence he expressed. In the next moment the attentive husband was by his pallid lady's side, and having, according to order, laid her gently upon the sofa, he bustled off to seek his daughter. And now it was that the greatest difficulty arose.

Patty, upon being assured that her mother was sea-sick, or lake-sick, and desired her assistance, burst forth in her usual style of free remonstrance upon the absurdity of supposing that she could do her any good.

"Lor, papa!" she exclaimed, "how you do spoil her! I don't believe she's any more sick than I am. Why, she eat like a wolf at breakfast. I do wish you would let me alone, papa. I want to stay here till Tornorino comes back; he said he was only going for a minute, and he'll think I am tumbled overboard, if he does not find me here."

It has been hinted before, that the major, from some little feeling of paternal weakness, did not wish that his daughter should made fully acquainted with all the manœuvrings to which he or

sionally found himself compelled to have recourse, when his affectionate regard for the welfare of his family induced him to practise any trifling irregularity in his monetary transactions. It was this feeling which now embarrassed him. Patty, as everybody knows, was a very quick, intelligent young woman, and a very few words would have sufficed to make her comprehend the whole business; but Major Allen Barnaby did not like to speak these few words. He knew, however, that the co-operation of his daughter, in the rather hazardous scheme now afoot, was absolutely necessary, and therefore, after looking at her with an air of perplexity for half a minute, he said—

"Come, come, Patty, you must not only be a good girl, but a very particularly good girl just now, or we shall get into a worse scrape than you think for. After you all left New York, I got among a set of worthless chaps, which it is very difficult to help doing sometimes in a strange country, and we got quarrelling, and, as ill-luck would have it, one of the fellows insisted upon it that I should fight a duel with him, which, I am sorry to say, ended fatally. I am sure I did not know it at the time, but I have been told since, that the United States government never forgives a man who kills another in a duel, and I am therefore now in the greatest possible danger of being taken up and executed."

"Lor, papa! How horrid!" exclaimed Patty, looking a little terrified; "but what has all this to do with ma's being sick?"

"A great deal, my dear, as you will find, if you will but have patience to listen to me," he replied. "I have discovered within this hour, Patty, that I am suspected by a man on board, and my only chance of saving myself, is by getting on shore disguised as a woman."

"Oh, goodness! What fun!" exclaimed Madame Tornorino, clapping her hands with an air of great hilarity. "But lor, pa! they'll be sure to find you out."

"I hope not, my dear," said the major, gravely; "but this will depend entirely on the manner in which my family assist me."

He then explained to her the mode in which he intended to proceed, endeavouring to impress upon her mind the absolute necessity of silence and caution amongst them all, and the conversation ended at last by her saying in a whisper, but very earnestly—

"Well, pap, it shan't be my fault if you are hanged, you may depend upon that."

Perfectly contented by this affectionate assurance, the major then dismissed her, and the subsequent scenes of the drama followed exactly in the order which Mrs. Allen Barnaby had laid down, and without any blundering whatever on the part of the *dramatis personæ*, till the critical moment arrived when the major, with one arm resting on that of Tornorino, and the other raised in order to hold a pocket-handkerchief to his mouth, stepped in

with a languid air from the ladies' cabin, and began his hazardous progress through the long saloon appropriated to the gentlemen.

Nothing could possibly be better than the arrangement of his drapery. The large shawl thrown over his shoulders completely disguised the outline of his person; and perhaps no man of his age, measuring five feet ten and a half, ever contrived to contract his limbs more skilfully than did Major Allen Barnaby, as he slowly moved onwards. It was probably the perfect success with which he enacted his wife's attitude as he drooped his head a little on one side, while his feathers and flowing veil drooped also, that upset the gravity of Patty, which, till that moment, she had sustained admirably, but then, for one short moment, she forgot herself, and exclaiming aloud, "Oh! my goodness, how funny!" she clapped her hands in her usual joyous style, and laughed outright.

The admirable presence of mind of the Don, however, prevented any fatal effects from this thoughtless sally.

"Der is nothing to laugh, my lof, in de sickness," he said, shaking his head very gravely, while the really suffering major uttered so sad and womanly a sigh, that if anybody had thought about them at all, it could only have been to deprecate the hard-hearted levity of the young woman, who could find amusement in her feeble mother's sufferings. Fortunately, however, the two or three persons who were scattered through the long room, were too much occupied by their own concerns to pay any attention to the group, and they made their way to the top of the stairs just as the first rush of the persons intending to land at Cleveland, was elbowing and shouldering its way across the plank. Either from the fear that a too close juxtaposition with those who were jostling one another as they crossed, might betray him, or else from the wish to be perfectly consistent in the representation of his assumed character, the major held back for a moment, till a dozen or so of the most eager had passed the plank; then, still preserving with admirable steadiness of demeanour, the timid face of a suffering woman, he too crossed it, Tornorino very carefully stepping backwards as he preceded him, and the penitent Patty following, looking as grave as a judge.

In this manner they very safely reached the bank; but just as the delighted major felt his feet firmly planted on the sod, and while he was thinking that he might now venture to recover himself a little, and take, under shadow of the darkness, a tolerably vigorous step forward, he felt a somewhat heavy arm upon his shoulder, and fully expected in the next moment to see the long visage of Mr. Gabriel Monkton peering at him.

"Can I be of any use to you, ladies?" said a voice at his ear, which even at that moment of agitation he felt certain was not the voice of the dreaded Gabriel. "You seem a little bewildered, I think, and if I can be of any service, you may command me."

These very obliging words, added by the same voice, wh

though certainly not that of Mr. Gabriel Monkton, did not appear to the major to be perfectly unknown, caused him to turn his head towards the speaker, and even to hazard the danger of rendering visible the "pearl under his muffler," by raising his veil for the purpose of obtaining as good a view, as the waning light would permit, of the features of this courteous stranger.

On turning his eyes in the direction from whence the voice came, he perceived a stout-looking country-wife sort of a body, with a shabby old bonnet pulled low over her face, a very worn-out shawl, a common cotton-gown pulled up through the pocket-holes, and a pair of fat, naked arms, with sleeves pushed up considerably above the elbow.

The woman stepped back as soon as the major's eye fell upon her, and addressing Patty, who followed close behind, said—

"You are a very pretty young lady, upon my word. Would you like to have your fortune told, miss?"

"Miss! indeed!" cried the indignant married woman, who even in that moment of peril could not permit such a blunder to pass unnoticed. "What a fool of a woman you must be, to fancy I am an unmarried girl! We don't want any of your help, you may depend upon that, so you may get away, and let us walk on by ourselves in peace and quiet."

"Walk on in peace, my pretty dear, by all means," said the woman; "but don't be so fond of quiet as to send off good company."

Major Allen Barnaby, notwithstanding the very good reasons he had for wishing to advance beyond the reach of a recall from the steamboat, nevertheless lingered on the way for the purpose of hearing the above dialogue, and when it had reached this point, he suddenly stopped, and having looked round him on all sides without perceiving any one pursuing, or appearing particularly to notice them, he cautiously pronounced the word "Wife!" at no great distance from the ear of the female who had thus beset Patty.

"It is not every wise child that knows its own mother," said the voice of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, from beneath the humble weeds of the seeming stranger; "nevertheless, a runaway gentleman, it seems, may know his own wife.

"How could you be so stupid, Patty? However, this is no time to stand mumming and making fun," continued my heroine, for she indeed it was, who had thus unceremoniously addressed the party. "Look along the road, major," she added, applying herself to the ear of the tall lady who still rested on the arm of Don Tornorino. "Look along the road, and you will see in what direction the danger lies. You and I must not go that way. Stop one minute, all of you, and I will tell you what must be done. You and I, Madame Feathers-and-lace, must just betake ourselves to the shelter of that particularly dark-looking corner yonder between that barn-looking building and the trees, and there, I flatter myself,

we may contrive both to hidē ourselves till the steamboat is off again ; and then, by the help of this basket and bundle, make ourselves, both of us, more fit to be seen. You, Tornorino and Patty, must immediately run back to look after the luggage. Here is some silver for you to pay one of those porters there that are galloping with their trucks down to the landing-place to look after a job. When you have got everything on shore, five trunks, two portmanteaus, three hampers, and four carpet-bags, REMEMBER, when you have got it all together, take it to the first handsome-looking hotel you come to ; there, look, Tornorino, it must be that house where, dark as it is getting, you can distinguish so many people before the door. Take all the things there, and as soon as you have heard the bell ring, and seen the boat fairly off, the major and I will come strolling up, as if we had but just that minute stepped on shore, and you and Patty had better be on the look-out for us."

Even Patty seemed at this moment to feel that it was a master-spirit who thus rapidly dictated what was to be done, and with a greater degree of passive obedience than was at all usual to her, she quietly placed herself by her husband's side, took hold of his offered arm, and without another word being spoken by any of the party, they divided, and marched off exactly as my ready-witted heroine had commanded.

The most intimate knowledge of the locality could not have enabled this admirable woman more judiciously to select a spot for arranging the attire of herself and husband than the one which she had thus instinctively chosen ; no eye, no sound, no even imagined danger, occurred [to scare or interrupt them, and several minutes before the parting bell of the steamboat was heard, they were both of them attired in all respects exactly as they had been when they first stepped on board her. The interval of waiting which followed was gratefully employed by the major in expressing to his charming wife a part, at least, of the admiration and tenderness which her admirable conduct had inspired. Nothing, in fact, could be more amiable than the manner in which these sentiments were uttered and received ; Major and Mrs. Allen Barnaby were indeed a perfect pattern couple.

The signal for which they had waited having been at length heard, and sufficient time allowed for the little wharf near which they had to pass, to have recovered its usual tranquillity, the excellently-matched pair walked forth from the shelter of the lofty catalpa trees, beneath which they had repaired their toilets, and one taking the bag, and the other the basket, with the careless air with which active-minded travellers do take bags and baskets on quitting steamboats, they sauntered, arm-in-arm, first to the wharf, and *on from the wharf, with the aspect and manner of intelligent and ious strangers, desirous of looking about them, and seeing every-
g that was to be seen.*

In this manner they approached the Washington's Head hotel, at the door of which they found the grinning Patty, and her more sober-minded spouse, who both greeted them at the same moment; the former by clapping her hands, and exclaiming, "Well done, ma and pa! If you ain't two good ones!"

The latter, by gently observing that, "All de tings were com, and rooms bespeak."

Never had Mrs. Allen Barnaby walked up a room with more dignity than she now did that of the *table d'hôte* of the Washington's Head. It was nearly impossible at any time that she could pass unnoticed, so peculiarly striking were her person and demeanour, but it now was less possible than ever. The triumph of success, the pride of genius, and the consciousness of noble daring, brightened her eye, and rendered firm her step. Every eye in the room was fixed upon her. The observant major saw this and trembled. But the same benignant destiny which had bestowed my heroine upon him as a wife, seemed to guard him at this happy moment from any accident which might render this blessing abortive; for not one of the passengers who had accompanied them from Buffalo was in the room, or even the house. Of those who had landed, by far the greater number had returned on board; and of the rest, some had gone at once to their homes in the town of Cleveland, and the rest to some other of the hotels.

It was not immediately, however, that even our bold major ventured to look about him sufficiently to ascertain this important and very agreeable fact; but at length, as his modest glances reached further and further round the room, he felt delightedly convinced that so it was. Anything more genial, more domestically sociable, more liberally cheering than this supper at the Washington's Head, Cleveland, can scarcely be imagined. The major ordered champagne, the ladies declared it first-rate, and the Don, whose happy temperament never required anything for the enjoyment of perfect felicity but the absence of want of all kinds, and the presence of all such good things as his taste particularly approved, was perfectly touching in his manner of partaking his repast; and when he said, as the last drop was drained from the second bottle into the glass of his august mother-in-law—

"Ah, ma! one little drop more for my Pati!" it would have required a much harder heart than that of the major to have withstood the hint. A third bottle of champagne was accordingly ordered, and when it had vanished, and not till then, my heroine and her fair daughter retreated for the night, leaving the major and his son-in-law to talk over the adventures of the last few days.

CHAPTER XLI.

It can surprise nobody to hear that Mrs. Allen Barnaby did not rise very early on the following morning. She really had exerted herself greatly through the eventful day which had been passed on board the steamboat, and even the very act of taking what she felt to be needful refreshment afterwards, contributed to the necessity of lengthened rest on the following morning. It was not, therefore, till past ten o'clock on that morning, that my heroine was seen majestically descending the stairs of the hotel, adorned with very considerable care and elegance, and with an expression of countenance perfectly radiant from the effect of the meditations in which she had indulged during the time she had employed in dressing. Her position was, in truth, at this moment such as could not fail to cheer the spirits of any woman possessed of such a mind as hers. No philosopher, whether ethical, moral, or military, could be more aware of the sinewy species of strength and power given by money, than was my heroine; and never had she felt so delightful an assurance of having money at her command as at that moment. The very stairs, as they creaked beneath her tread, seemed to do her homage, while the glances of a group of men stationed at the street door, which stood open immediately in front of her as she descended, caused her to remember that, considering her size, she had a very well-formed foot, and thus, as is the case of the charming Musidora—

A sense
Of self-approving beauty stole across
Her busy thought—

and completed the happiness of the moment.

But, alas for the short-lived felicity of mortals! Scarcely had the smile suggested by the thought above alluded to dimpled on her cheek, than her eye caught the countenance of her husband, which, equally to her surprise and displeasure, was no longer decked in grateful and affectionate jocosity, as she had reasonably hoped to meet it, but wore an aspect of uneasiness and gloom that seemed to speak of anything rather than difficulties overcome, and a heart at ease.

"What's in the wind now?" thought she, as she made the last step of the descent, and swung herself with a graceful sort of impetus round the final banister, in order to follow the direction in which her husband's eye, and the movement of his head, seemed to marshal her.

The moment the major perceived that she understood his sign he walked rapidly on, and at the distance of some paces disappeared.

within a door, through which she also passed the minute after, and then, with equal surprise and alarm, saw him shut and bolt it behind her.

"What on earth is the matter now, Major Allen Barnaby?" said she, knitting her brows, and looking at least a dozen years older than she had done a few minutes before. "You surely have not found time enough to get into another scrape?"

"You should say, my dear, that I have not found time enough to get out of an old one. How much or how little danger threatens me at this moment, I am really unable to say; but perhaps when I have told you exactly what I have heard, you may be able to give me better advice than I could give myself. You know, my dear, what a confidence I have in your judgment, and upon my honour I never wanted a little help more in my life, for hang me if I know which way to turn, or what to do."

"Let me hear the worst at once," she replied with some slight movement of impatience; "I dare say I shall find a way out of the scrape just as easily as you found your way into it."

"Heaven grant you may, my dear, but I shall say you are a witch if you do. The case is this: I got up this morning, while you were still fast asleep, and on coming down stairs I found a whole bevy of gentlemen tipplers taking their morning dram at the bar. I threw a pretty sharp look amongst them to find out if any of our late fellow passengers were of the set, and presently became perfectly certain that there was not one. Whereupon I drew near among the rest, and although, as you know well enough I am no great dram-drinker, I called for a glass like the others, that I might see and hear a little what was going on. The first words which regaled my ears were these: 'A pretty considerable queer spec old Gabriel Monkton seems after this go. Did you hear about it, colonel?' The personage thus addressed was no other than our right worshipful landlord, and he replied with all the dignity of his military rank, and his distinguished office united, 'Hear of it? I expect I did. Gabriel has promised me I don't know how many votes if I will keep a sharp look-out after the females. And that I promised, and that I'll do, provided I can be availed of what they are like and where they are lodged. The man himself, him what he suspects, you know, is still snug enough on board, he told me, but the woman and another man belonging to them was to land last night, on account of our glorious lake disagreeing with their English stomachs. If it wasn't for Gabriel's telling me the man was still aboard, and that the woman had but one man with them, I should be apt to suspect that we had got the very identical set in the house at this moment.' Now, wife, what do you say to that, by way of a pleasant hint? And how, in the d—'s name are we to steer clear through such a confounded set of breakers as it's easy to see ahead?"

"You have not told me all, as yet, major," said my heroine,

anxiously ; " you have not told me if any of the party took particular notice of you ? "

" Not the least in the world," he replied. " Half-a-dozen of them began immediately to talk together, and having paid my sip' for my glass to a young urchin who was acting as deputy to his father at the bar, I suffered three or four fresh stragglers to push on before me to listen to the long-winded colonel's history of all that was known or suspected about myself, and quietly withdrew from the infernal set without appearing to attract the least attention from any one. Now then, wife, that is all and everything I have got to tell you ; and I shall be very happy, in my turn, to listen to anything and everything you may wish to say upon it, by way of commentary."

It was at least two minutes before Mrs. Allen Barnaby answered this appeal, but so eloquently meditative was her countenance that the major, notwithstanding the urgent necessity he felt there was for immediate action, betrayed no symptom of impatience, but waited in perfect silence till his charming oracle spoke.

" This is just about the worst job we've had, major," she said at length ; " for as sure as you stand there, we shall have a regular hue and cry after us throughout the country ; and as it is not possible to stir an inch without being examined by every man, woman, and child you meet, as if you were before a court of justice, it will certainly be no easy matter to keep clear of discovery. However, it won't do, Donny, to stand still in despair, and cry ' all's over ! ' We are neither of us fit for that sort of pitiful work. Faint heart, they say, never won fair lady, and I am sure faint heart never saved bold gentleman. Do you remember, my dear, the sort of dress and demeanour which your lively fancy induced you to assume when you were first introduced to my relations, the Huberts, at Brighton ? "

" Oh yes, perfectly," said the major, briskly. " I thought it advisable to be in the saint line then, in order to assimilate myself to the character of the former Mr. O'Donagough."

" Exactly so, my dear," said his wife ; " but though you remember this, I am sure you do not remember (for it was impossible you could judge of it) the inconceivable alteration which this dress and manner made in your appearance. It is impossible any disguise could be more complete. What I should propose, therefore, is, that you resume this for the time we remain in the country. For let rumours be circulated about you either from New Orleans, Big-Gang Bank, Philadelphia, New York, or this nasty, hateful Lake Erie, this disguise would completely baffle them all, for in neither of these places, my dear, did you think proper to appear at all in the likeness of a saint. And besides, you know, there is not a country in the whole world where it would be likely to answer better in every respect ; for while we were at the Springs I hear a dozen different histories at the very least, all showing the extr

dinary respect and veneration in which the travelling evangelical preachers are held. They told me that if a new dancing-girl and a new preacher appeared in a town at the same time, it was always a very close run contest between them, and generally ended by all the gentlemen following the dancer, and all the ladies the preacher. Now this would do for you exactly. Donny, because none of your little tricks have been played off upon the ladies, and therefore none of them, go where we may, will be likely to find you out."

"But surely, my dear, you don't expect me actually to set up for a preacher?" cried the major, looking a good deal alarmed.

"And pray, why not, Major Allen Barnaby?" replied his high-spirited wife: "what in the world should prevent you?"

"The not having your universal and commanding genius, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," he rejoined, adding, very gravely, "I have not the slightest objection to shave close, mustache, *favoris*, and all, if you advise it, and I shall not wonder if, in fact, it were to prove the very best thing I could possibly do. But as to mounting a pulpit, I must confess that I do not feel a call for it. I am convinced that I should stand staring at the congregation like a fool, without being able to say a word."

"Nonsense, major! When did you ever find it difficult to palaver? You are the very man for it. We will just contrive, if we can, that you shall hear some high-flying preacher once, and when you see how it is done, you will find it easy enough to set off in the same style, I'll be bound for you."

"Well, then—set about it, my Barnaby! You are a wonder of a woman, and I believe you could make me do anything in the world that you took it into your head to command. Just say when I must shave, and where I must go, and what I must preach, and you shall find me a perfect pattern of obedience."

"You are a perfect pattern of wisdom, Donny, I will say that for you. A wise man, when he is sinking, always holds fast—I take it—to what he thinks is most likely to float, and that you do this, my good major, I believe nobody will deny; and for that very reason, my dear, you will always find me ready and willing to hold out a helping hand to save you."

"Upon my soul! I have found it so, and I should more than once have been puzzled to know what to do without you, there is no denying it. Now, then, I presume you mean to be off from this place directly. There's a boat goes by to Sandusky at eleven this morning, and another at nine in the evening, but, of course, the first will suit us best."

"Do you really think so, major?" said my heroine, looking in his face, with an eye that laughed very sanely. "If you do, I must confess that I do think you want a little of my assistance!"

"What do you mean?" said the major, slightly frowning, but at the same time firmly resolved to preserve his good humour, *let* is lady say what she would; "what can you mean by saying that?"

"I mean, Major Allen Barnaby," replied his wife, with mock solemnity, "that, if it be your will and pleasure to decide upon this mode of proceeding, the chances are about a thousand to one in favour of our being followed to Sandusky as suspicious characters."

"I have no doubt of it, Mrs. Allen Barnaby," replied the persecuted gentleman, rather tartly; "my own opinion is that the chances are about two thousand to half a one in favour of the agreeable catastrophe to which you allude."

"Then why risk it, my love?" said his wife, hanging her head sentimentally, and speaking with great tenderness of accent.

"And how avoid it?" he returned, precisely with the same attitude and tone.

"Wait one instant, and I will tell you," said his wife, placing her finger on her forehead and closing her eyes to give her thoughts uninterrupted range within. Having remained thus alone, as it were, for half a moment, she said, "In *this* way you must avoid it. Let us both immediately return to our room, you mounting the stairs first, and I behind you. No particular notice has been directed your way as yet. All was bustle and confusion when we came in last night, the waiters had just time enough to bring us all we called for, and, as it seemed, no more; for, if you remember, there was not one of them that remained in the room a moment after the wine, or whatever it was, had been set down. This morning, by your account, there was no more leisure for curious examination, than there was last night, so that I flatter myself you and your whiskers are not as yet much known by sight among them. Having reached our room, Donny, we will lock the door, and then I will shear you as close as a May-day lamb, in which operation your razor shall assist my scissors. And, then, Major Allen Barnaby, I will open the smallest of the three great trunks, and prove to you that, if I do upon some occasions expend a great deal in dress, with a view to the honour and respectability of my family, there are others when the most thoughtful economy in this respect is the rule of my actions. Do you remember, my dear, the black and gray suit in which you dined at the house of my nephew, General Hubert, at Brighton?"

"Yes, perfectly," replied the major, smiling, "but it is considerably more than a year ago that I last saw it, and it is quite beyond hope that you should have it here."

Mrs. Allen Barnaby laid her hand upon the bolt of the door to withdraw it, saying—

"Come up stairs with me, major, and you shall see. But cough a little as you pass by the bar, and hold your handkerchief to your face. We must not, just for the present, display your magnificent *mustaches*."

Thus instructed, and displaying in all ways the most exemplary obedience, the major left the little room in which the above

versation had passed, mounted the stairs, and, closely followed by his lady, entered the apartment in which they had passed the night and in which Tornorino had seen their voluminous luggage carefully lodged. Having reached this sanctuary and cautiously secured its door, not a moment was lost by either in performing the business they had in hand; and while she drew forth a complete suit of very evangelical-looking attire, complete even to the white cravat, and gray and black shot-silk waistcoat, he set to work upon his forest-like face, and hewed and mowed away till he was as well shaven and shorn as any reasonable Christian could desire. In the finishing this rather laborious work, she not only found time to assist him, but, as she did so, enlightened him as to what was next to be done, as follows:—

“Now then, Donny, with that dress yonder, carefully put on, and your low-crowned hat, upon this nice gray head, I will defy all the Gabriel Monktons in Yankee-land to identify you. So far, so good. But now listen to the rest. I suspect, by the way I have seen the servant girls coming and going, that there is a back stairs at the end of the long passage just outside our door. While you are dressing, I'll just have a peep as to that matter. If I am right, we know of course that it will open to the back of the house, because the passage runs straight through it. As soon as you get down stairs don't look in a bustle, but move quietly on, like a patient saint, as you are, to find your way out of the back door. This done, you may easily, of course, regain the street, and then make for the Franklin hotel, which you heard them say at the wharf was on the other side of the landing-place. When you get there, order breakfast for yourself and dinner for some friends, who are amusing themselves by looking about, and tell them that your party are going on to Sandusky by the nine o'clock boat. Meantime we will breakfast here, and announce that we are going off by the eleven o'clock boat, and just as it comes in sight I will have all the luggage taken down to the wharf. I will pay the bill, and tell the people that I expect you will meet us on board, but that if you happen to come in after we have left the house, they must send you after us in all haste. All this being provided for, the rest follows without difficulty. When we get down to the wharf at eleven o'clock, we shall, of course, have the dreadful disappointment of finding no Major Allen Barnaby there; whereupon I shall order the porter to set down the baggage, and leave it; and if he, or any of the clamorous waiters, invite us to turn back again, I shall pay them handsomely but decline the invitation, stating, as my reason, that I prefer being near the landing-place. And then, the Franklin hotel porters will, of course, offer their services, and ere midday, my dear, I shall, I doubt not, be safely reunited, not to Major Allen Barnaby, but to the reverend Mr. O'Donnough.”

“Excellent, perfect, and worthy of yourself!” exclaimed

major. "But the leather labels bearing our names at full length on the boxes?"

"They will be all lost, my dear, before we get to the Franklin hotel."

No single circumstance of this admirably arranged plan went wrong. Mrs. Allen Barnaby had exactly time enough for all she had to do before the eleven o'clock boat was announced. Tornorino and Patty were made to be perfectly *au fait* of the scheme; the bill, though a high one, was paid without a murmur, and the only recollection of the party that remained at the Washington hotel was, that they were a set of English spendthrifts, who drank champagne unaccountable, but made no bones about paying for it.

CHAPTER XLII.

THERE certainly are some people, who either from fortune, or temper, or the influence of both united, seem to swim down the stream of life more gaily than others. Such persons, it is true, will often keep their colours flying, long after fainter spirits would strike, which may often, perhaps, give them the appearance of being more triumphant than they really are; but if this be sometimes delusive, at any rate it has often the effect of imposing upon the parties themselves, and may perhaps not unfrequently produce that mad sort of luxury which, as the poet tells us, none but madmen know.

Considering the nature of the adventures through which the Barnaby race had passed since their arrival in the United States of America, and the species of catastrophe with which nearly every adventure had concluded, they could scarcely have enjoyed themselves so vehemently as they certainly did at the Franklin hotel, upon Lake Erie, had not their spirits been excited by some portion of the sort of laughing gas above alluded to. The supper at the Washington had been delightfully full of fun, frolic, triumph, and glee; and the dinner at the Franklin was, if possible, more brilliant still. Nobody, unless it had been Asmodeus himself, could have looked upon the group there assembled, and have doubted their being in the possession of some especial cause for rejoicing and merriment.

The harmony that reigned among them seemed as perfect as *the contentment*; and in short, a merrier party could not easily have been found. Patty, indeed, was a little in the dark as to the *nature of the scrape*, from which her "pap" had just escaped;

this only added to the jocularly of the rest, as she never alluded to the cleverness of her mamma, in managing so beautifully to prevent her papa's being hanged, without eliciting a most cordial burst of laughter from the major and the lady, and a charming simper of answering applause from her Don. But time wore away, and as the hours rolled on towards nine o'clock, Major Allen Barnaby hinted, with an amiable apology to the family group, for marring their mirth by drawing their attention to business, that it would be necessary, or at least prudent, to decide upon where they were to go, and what they were to do next, before going on board.

As he said this very gravely, the effect of it was rather to increase than mar their mirth, for Patty laughed immoderately, and declared that when "pap" put on a preaching face, in addition to his preaching garments, the fun was just perfect.

Whereupon the major, in order to prove his unabated good humour, and the reality of his reluctance to substitute business for fun, stood up, and placing the back of his chair before him to represent the front of a pulpit, he began, amidst shouts of applause from Patty and her mamma, to show them how he intended to preach. After devoting a few minutes, however, to this capital joke, he resumed his seat, and renewed his request that the subject of their next campaign might be taken into consideration.

"Where, for instance," he asked, "where are you to be, all of you, while I am performing the part of a travelling minister at Sandusky?"

"Where," repeated Patty. "Where should we be, my darling papa, but close to you, and hearing you preach to be sure."

"This would be the pleasantest scheme for me, my dear Patty, there can be no doubt of that," replied the major. "But I question whether it would be the safest."

"Because of the danger of my laughing, pa? Is that what you mean? If it is, you are just a goose for your pains," said his daughter, "for as I told you before, you shan't come to be hanged, if I can help it; and I'll be bound for it that if you give us a fair trial, mamma will be quite as likely to start off laughing, when you begin to preach, as I should."

"Thank you, my dear Patty, for caring so much about my safety," replied her father, politely kissing her hand, "But I am afraid, Patty, that it is not your laughing, or your mother's either, that will constitute the danger of our being together."

"I fancy not, indeed!" cried Mrs. Allen Barnaby, eagerly. "What can you be thinking off, child, to talk such nonsense? A pretty way it will be for him to remain unknown, to have you, and I, and Tornorino following him about?"

"Alas!" rejoined the major, tenderly, "no man wishing to escape observation, must travel with such handsome faces!"

"And that's true, Mr. Pap, I don't deny it," said the young beauty, with a well-pleased smile. "But what will you do with

us, then? Must we set off without you, as we did when we went to the Springs?"

"Exactly so, Madame Tornorino," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, with decision.

"Indeed, I am afraid that so it must be," quoth the major; "but it will only be necessary to make the separation long enough to insure my being pretty generally known by sight at Sandusky, as the Rev. Mr. O'Donagough. This will, you know, effectually prevent my being traced thither as Major Allen Barnaby, and it is to this device that I must trust for my security during my future wanderings through this comical country. Having thus thrown out my amiable friend, Mr. Gabriel Monkton, I shall have no doubts or fears whatever about rejoining you; and the only question is, as to where this reunion, so greatly wished for by me, shall take place."

"The first thing to consider in settling that point," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby, "is how we can, with the least danger of meeting any one whom we desire to avoid, draw gradually nearer and nearer to the coast; for I confess that, notwithstanding all the wonderful success we have met with, I shall be most excessively rejoiced to feel myself once more on the highway towards Europe. I don't care a straw about going back to England; but I certainly do long to be in Europe once more."

"And in Europe once more, my dear, you most certainly shall be before you are a year older, provided, that is to say, that you do not get tired of my company, and elope in the interval with some such fascinating individuals as Mr. Gabriel Monkton, Mr. John Williams, Mr. Colonel Beauchamp, or Mr. Judge Johnson. As for myself, I honestly avow that I have had quite enough of—'Well, and what may you be called?' and 'Where do you calculate you are going,' and 'What location did you fix in last?' I won't deny that I am tired to death of it all. But I have no great fancy for England either, just at present at least; and so if we are all agreed, I expect, as the darlings say, that our pleasantest plan will be to make for Havre-de-Grace, and from thence to Paris. Afterwards, perhaps, we may vary the scene again, by visiting Baden-Baden, you know, Tornorino. There are a thousand pleasant places we may go to, provided we can get off from these confounded States without having our wings clipped."

"And that I will engage for your doing, without let or hindrance," said his wife, "if you don't get tired of preaching too soon, Donny. I got a good deal of information about the western country at the Springs, and that it was, I believe, which first put the notion of your turning preacher into my head. Miss Wigly (that was the name of my principal friend at the Springs) Miss Wigly told me that it was quite past belief how a tolerably good looking man would be followed in any one of the western towns he did but make noise enough. Now I don't think anybody

deny, major, that you are rather more than *tolerably* well-looking still, though I won't say you are quite as handsome as when I first saw you at Clifton; and as for making a noise, as she calls it, if you have but the will, I am sure you will find the way."

"A thousand thanks for all your charming compliments, my dear," replied the major. "Trust me, it shall not be from want of exertion that I will fail. But what else did you learn from your friend Miss Wigly? I think it will be quite as well not to make any particular inquiries here about the country beyond Sandusky. There is no occasion whatever that we should leave a plan of our route behind us. Did the lady mention any considerable towns westward?"

"Oh, mercy, yes!" returned his wife; "more than I can remember, a great deal. But I have a sort of general idea about the way we have got to go, and of the principal towns we must pass, in order to get round again to the sea; for that you know is what we must do before we can set off according to the major's beautiful new plan."

"Most certainly, my dear," he replied, "we must get round again, as you call it, to the sea. But there is more than that to be thought of. We have got to make up our minds as to which port will be most agreeable to us. I don't think I should particularly like either New York, Philadelphia, or New Orleans. However, there are many others to choose from; but we need not trouble ourselves about that now. Let us get fairly off to the 'wild west,' as some of them call it, and we can settle about the port to sail from afterwards."

"To be sure we can," answered his wife, "and you may be sure of something else, too, and that is, if you will go on, dressed as you are now, and let us call all ourselves O'Donagough, we may go safe and sound anywhere. No living soul will ever find us out, particularly if we take care not to stay too long."

"My gracious! how you talk, mamma!" cried Patty, staring at her. "Do you fancy that because pap happened to fight a duel at New York, like an honourable, brave gentleman as he is, that we are all to be hunted through the country, as if we were wild beasts, with a pack of dogs at our heels?"

The rest of the party exchanged looks upon this very sensible question, and it seemed for a moment as if nobody chose to answer it; but at length Major Allen Barnaby replied—

"Nothing can be more natural than your observation, my dear Patty; but the fact is, that the government of the United States is very remarkable upon this point. The horror in which they hold duelling is so great, that all the States have agreed together, to punish with sudden and prompt vengeance, any individual who has been guilty of it, let him have committed it where he may. However, I rest with entire confidence on the opinion of your mother, as to the safety insured by the change of name and appearance, and

I really think that once out of this part of the country, we may make our way to the coast by whatever course may eventually appear the most agreeable to us."

"Well, then, that's all settled," cried my heroine, gaily, "and there is only one more question to be asked before we make ourselves ready for starting. Where are we to perch ourselves while the reverend major establishes his reputation as a preacher at Sandusky?"

"Upon my word, my dear, it is a question that I think you must answer yourself; for, thanks to your Miss Wigly, it seems evident that you know more about that part of the country than I do," replied the major.

"Well then," she replied with decision, "I vote for our pushing on to Pittsburg at once, because I know that is one of the places at which we may conveniently decide whether we will go to New Orleans or not. It would be, certainly, by far the most convenient; for Miss Wigly told me it was all by water, and monstrous cheap; and the other way, we should have to cross over some tiresome high mountains which would cost double as much."

"Good; that, then, will be the place and the time for deciding our port of embarkation. Yes, Pittsburg shall be your quarters till I rejoin you," said the major, "which will be, I should hope, in about ten days or a fortnight."

This ended the discussion; and till the steamboat was announced the party amused themselves by imagining the vexation of Mr. Gabriel Monkton on arriving at Sandusky, and finding the bird he was in pursuit of flown.

Had any doubts rested on the minds of Major and Mrs. Allen Barnaby, as to the advantages likely to arise from the re-assumption of the respectable attire which had been first adopted at Brighton, the very first specimen of their reception on board the boat would have removed them.

Though the day had been bright and warm, the evening air on the lake was already cold and chilling, and my heroine and her daughter almost immediately descended to the ladies' cabin in search of warmth and shelter. Even before they moved from the gallery, however, the warmth-loving Tornorino had escaped to the smoky sanctuary of the gentlemen's saloon, so that when the ladies moved, Major Allen Barnaby, or rather Mr. O'Donoghough, would have been left alone, had he not moved with them. He therefore did so, watching with his usual attention the steps of his charming Patty, whose peculiar style of galloping movement on all occasions, made the operation of descending cabin stairs somewhat dangerous. Ere she reached the door at the bottom, however, which as it was open, displayed a considerable number of females within, she suddenly stopped, exclaiming—

"Oh, goodness, papa! Get up stairs again as fast as you possibly can. Do you know, we were told at the Springs, the

was not at all safe for a gentleman to go into the ladies' cabin after it was the least bit dark; for that if they did, they were very often soused over head and ears with water, and sometimes made wet to their skin, before they could get away."

This advice being given without any mitigation of the speaker's usually well-sustained voice, it reached the ears of two ladies, who at that moment occupied the doorway; and the light of the ample lamp above it, darting its rays at the same moment, full upon the comely shaven face, cropped gray hair, and sable suit of the major, they were both instantly seized with a fit of compunction at the idea, that so reverend-looking a gentleman should suppose it possible that, among "American females," he should run any risk of being subjected to the discipline sometimes resorted to, in order to keep persons of a far different stamp in order.

Full of praiseworthy feeling, the eldest of the two ladies exclaimed, "Oh my! Pray, miss, don't say that to the gentleman, as if what you describe was intended for such as him! It would be twenty times more likely, sir," she added, making the respectable-looking gentleman a low courtesy, "ay, sir, fifty times more likely, I expect, that every female present should quit and be off to the deck to make place to a gentleman of your appearance, than do by you what the young lady mentions. But I calculate she is a stranger in these parts."

Nothing could be better timed than this amiable and conciliating address; for it not only gave cheering evidence of the perfect success of Mrs. Allen Barnaby's happily-imagined project, but most fortunately reminded the principal actor in it of his cue, which, to say truth, he had utterly forgotten, and had not the warning voice reached him at that identical moment, he would have replied to his daughter's speech in a manner which might have very nearly neutralised the effect of his appearance. As it was, however, all went well.

The major was far from being a slow man, and too much depended upon his own adroitness on the present occasion for him not to rally his powers in an instant, so as to perform the part his admirable wife had allotted him, in a manner to do him as well as herself infinite honour. Great indeed would have been the shock to her nerves, if he had *not* done so, for she was on the stair behind him, and her noble bosom heaved with anxiety as she awaited his reply to the words above recorded. But she had no cause to fear; his words were appropriate, but his manner was better still.

"May you meet the reward you deserve, dear lady, for feelings which do you so much honour," he said. "I will not abuse this most exemplary feeling; but if it be shared, as I trust it is, by the amiable-looking group I see behind you, I will enter amongst you with pleasure for a short interval, hoping that my presence may do more good than harm."

The meekness of this reply was exceedingly touching, from

modesty, the humility, and gentleness of its tone, and it instantly received the reward it deserved; for no less than six females more, all of them young, and for the most part well-looking, pressed forward to second the invitation of the first speaker.

The only one indeed, who was neither the one nor the other, was the only one also who did not appear to share the general enthusiasm. She kept herself very decidedly apart from the group that now pressed round the reverend Mr. O'Donagough, very much after the manner of bees round honey, nor did she open her lips at all, till the stewardess came in to complete her arrangements for the night, and to her she certainly took the liberty of addressing a few observations, but not in a tone sufficiently loud to prevent the eager conversation still going on among the rest of the party from continuing as uninterruptedly as if she had not spoken at all.

"I guess," said one pretty young lady, about seventeen years of age, "that so kind and pious a gentleman as you seem to be, sir, won't take it amiss if one of the sisters of the Needle Steeple congregation of Sandusky takes the liberty of asking your name?"

"Instead of a liberty, my dearest young lady, I can only look upon it as a beautiful proof of a lovely Christian spirit, seeking fellowship and brotherhood with the godly," replied the reverend Mr. O'Donagough.

"Indeed, sir," responded the fair sister, "I calculated that you would just say that, or else I'm sure I wouldn't have spoken for the world. Thanks to my pastors and masters, I know my duty better than to put in my oar out of place. And what is your name then, sir?"

Our major was at this moment in imminent danger of exchanging a glance with his wife, so greatly amused was he at perceiving that notwithstanding the decided evangelical tendency of his fair fellow-passenger, the national catechism still evidently superseded all others in her thoughts. But luckily he remembered what he was about, and in such time too, that the profane smile was perfectly well converted into everything he wished to make it, and he replied in the very best manner possible—

"My name, my dear young lady, is O'Donagough. I am called the reverend Mr. O'Donagough."

"Oh my!" exclaimed the charming young creature in return, "I didn't for a single moment doubt your being the reverend, that would have been a sin indeed, that I should have had to confess at the next meeting of the sisters. In course, sir, you have heard tell of the Needle Steeple congregation of Sandusky? I believe our congregation is pretty well known by this time in most parts of the world."

"It would be an ignorance of which I might justly be ashamed my dear young lady, had I not heard of it; but I rejoice to say that it is long since I first became acquainted with the admirable son"

to which you allude. Not personally, indeed, that is a happiness to which I am still looking forward with all the eagerness of hope; but it is long since the Needle Steeple congregation of Sandusky has been known to me by the voice of fame."

"My! Isn't it a pleasure and a reward, Mrs. Tomkins, to hear ourselves spoken of in this way by such a pious gentleman, from over the sea too, as 'tis plain enough he is by his way?" said the young lady, clasping her hands thankfully.

"I am sure, Miss Vanderpuff, I feel it to be so, from the very top of my head to the soles of my feet, and I am thankful for the privilege of conversing with the like. It may not be that impossible, sir," continued Mrs. Tomkins, addressing the major, with a most engaging look of affectionate humility, "indeed, I can't say that I see it should be at all improbable, but what you crossed the water just on purpose to have a look at us. Our revivals are talked of far and near, *that* we all know for a certainty, and our camp-meetings have been taken as a pattern and example for miles and miles."

"My dear ladies," replied the Rev. Mr. O'Donagough, pressing both his hands firmly upon his heart, and raising his eyes with great fervour to the ceiling of the cabin, "my dear ladies, it is difficult for me to express my feelings at this moment! This lucky chance, this happy, thrice happy accident, inspires me with a degree of joy and thankfulness that I have no language adequately to express. Your conjecture is perfectly correct, my excellent Mrs. Tomkins. I *did* indeed leave my native land for the express purpose of becoming personally acquainted with the Needle Steeple congregation of Sandusky, in the delightful hope that by the most indefatigable attention on my part to its principles, and all the precious regulations respecting it, I might be enabled to carry home with me, to my own dear, but comparatively benighted country, such hints of holiness and morsels of mercy as might enable me to purify and enlighten my own beloved congregation so as to make them become to Great Britain what the Needle Steeple congregation of Sandusky has become to the United States of America. Think, then, dear ladies," he continued, "think what must be my feelings at finding myself thus in the very midst of those for whose sake I have toiled and tossed across the wide Atlantic!"

"It is indeed a most providential blessing, sir," said a third lady, coming forward and placing herself, with her hands crossed before her, immediately opposite to him. "I am Mrs. General Pedmington, of Mount Lebanon, and these two sisters of the congregation will be able, I expect, to give you very satisfactory reasons for thinking that if you indeed seek to make yourself acquainted with the Needle Steeple and its dependencies, you were pretty tolerably in the right path, when you happened to fall in with me."

"Oh, my! I expect that you are, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Vanderpuff; "isn't he, Mrs. Tomkins?"

"Indeed, sir, and that's what you are," returned the lady thus appealed to. "Mrs. General Pedmington is the very tiptop of the congregation in all respects, and has sat in the front row of the anxious benches for these two years past."

"And it is she, sir, who gives up at Mount Lebanon (and a right down beautiful place it is, too) the very largest and holiest of parties throughout the Revivals. It is a privilege just to be present at one of them. I am sure no person of good judgment would ever wish to make one in a worldly-minded party afterwards."

"A privilege, indeed!" returned the major, with a deep drawn sigh; "I know of none in any country that I should value so highly."

"Then, in course, sir, you ought to be one of us, and such I hope you will be, Mr. O'Donagough; that, sir, I think is your name?"

Mr. O'Donagough bowed, and looked deeply grateful.

"Well then, sir, when we reach our place of destination, I hope we shall become better acquainted. My residence, as these ladies have told you, is Mount Lebanon, and when you have fixed yourself at your boarding-house, or hotel, as the case may be, you shall be pleased to send me up your address, and I will take care that one or two of our ministers shall wait upon you, and then we will fix an evening for meeting the sisters and a few clerical individuals at my house."

This open and decided patronage on the part of Mrs. General Pedmington induced the other professing ladies of the company to take courage, and come forward from behind the bed-curtains, where they had concealed themselves on the entrance of the reverend gentleman; and one or two among them even ventured to put into his hand some little tracts, without which, as we all know, such ladies never travel, so that in the course of a few minutes the major found himself the centre of a circle which effectually hemmed him in, and rendered his withdrawing himself from the forbidden precincts where this scene took place, a matter of very great difficulty.

While all this interesting conversation was going on in one part of the little cabin, Mrs. Allen Barnaby and her fair daughter took refuge in another, and that at the farthest possible extremity from the scene of action.

My heroine's motive for thus withdrawing herself was one which at every period of her life, and under all variety of circumstances, had ever maintained too strong and active a hold upon her mind to be ever entirely laid aside or forgotten. Personal comfort, and the best accommodation for the coming night, which the actual state of things permitted, occupied her completely during the inter-

val which the major was employing with so much energy in propitiating the favour of his new friends. But the circumstances in which Madame Tornorino found herself were totally different from those of either of her parents. At this period she had but one sole object in view, which was to conceal the irresistible fit of laughter which seized upon her, on hearing her father make the various speeches recorded above. Under any other circumstances whatever, the unscrupulous Patty would have laughed out, without caring a single farthing whether "pa" and "ma" were angry or pleased.

But the notion which she had got into her head, that her father was in very considerable danger of being hanged, and certainly would be if discovered to be Major Allen Barnaby, instead of the reverend Mr. O'Donagough, really terrified her greatly, and she never in her life had exerted herself so strenuously to overcome any feeling as she now did to check her ill-timed mirth; but it was all in vain. Totally unused to restraint of any kind, she was quite unable to control her rebellious muscles, and after a long and violent struggle, finally broke out into one of the most vociferous paroxysms of laughter that was ever heard, just as her father, urged by his success up to the very enthusiasm of perfect acting, stretched out his hands right and left to receive the offered tracts, with a smile, which many besides Patty might have found it difficult to withstand.

The effect of this sudden explosion was startling, and might have been fatal, but for the admirable presence of mind of the major. No instant was lost by him in doubting what the sound might be, or what the cause of it; nor did it take him longer to decide how this alarming *contretemps* should be met.

The effect of this tremendous burst of merriment was not more startling to himself than to those who stood around, each meekly meditating how best to display before the eyes of so holy a gentleman their own particular and individual holiness. As the unexpected sound burst upon their ears, they one and all stood with staring eyes, raised hands, and open mouths, as if they had each been touched by an enchanter's hand, and were rapidly passing from flesh and blood to stone.

"Oh my! what's that?" cried Miss Vanderpuff, actually trembling from head to foot.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" groaned good Mrs. Tomkins; "it is right down awful to hear it; for as sure as the sun is in heaven, it is neither more nor less than somebody just laughing at us."

"And if it is, Mrs. Tomkins," observed the stately Mrs. General Pedunington, with a withering frown, "what is that to us? Are we still so unworthy of our election as to tremble before the idiot roar of a scoffer?"

"But, ma'am, 'tis the very lady he brought down?" screamed another sister, whose eye following the direction of the sound,

caught sight of the unlucky Patty's showy dress, peeping from behind the curtain of one of the little beds, in which she had endeavoured to hide herself.

"Possible?" cried another, looking at the major with an altered eye, and appearing to shudder, as if seized with an ague fit.

"Possible!" screamed a third.

"Possible!" echoed a fourth.

Alas, poor Major! How stood he the while?

In reply to this but too intelligible demand, as to the possibility of his being in any way connected with this irreverent laughter, he looked around him with an eye expressive of such profound melancholy, that ere he had spoken a single word in his own defence, his cause was already half gained. But he did not do his tongue such injustice as to trust only to his eye, although that expressive organ was again called upon to aid him ere he spoke, for drawing a white handkerchief from his pocket, he pressed it to the upper part of his face, and by a slightly convulsive movement about the shoulders, might be supposed for several minutes to be weeping bitterly. No men in the world weep so much as the itinerant preachers of America; and this yielding to the weakness in their military disciple was a fine trait of acute observation. Having recovered himself, however, from this first paroxysm of emotion, he said—

"Pity me, my friends, pity the misery of an unhappy father, whose only child has made herself the wife of a Catholic, and then poisoned the dreadful shaft thus hurled at the very tenderest point of his heart, by giving way to ribald merriment, such as you have just listened to whenever she hears the voice of evangelical holiness from any one. Oh! what are the tortures of that inquisition which her new faith teaches her to venerate, compared to what she now inflicts upon me?"

It is perfectly impossible to conceive a more touching scene than that which followed this confidential avowal. The five sisters of the Needle Steeple congregation, with the distinguished Mrs. General Pedmington at their head, vied with each other in demonstrating the tender commiseration to which this disclosure had given birth. Sighs, groans, broken sentences, and copious tears, all bore witness to their amiable feelings.

"And your lady, sir?" said Mrs. General Pedmington, making a gulping effort to overcome her emotion, and speak distinctly "your lady—how does she conduct herself in this trying case?"

"Alas, madam! alas! I have no comfort there," was the melancholy reply. "She is within hearing, ma'am, though she has crept into yonder bed, and affects to be sleeping, but however much I may suffer for it afterwards, I will not shrink from avowing such ears as yours, the terrible fate that has fallen upon me."

wife! having a daughter, and yet being worse than childless! Dear, excellent ladies, I have now opened my whole heart to you, and the comfort of it is great, for I know you will pity me!"

Peculiarly affectionate and endearing as are the manners and feelings of such ladies as the sisters of the Needle Steeple congregation to all persons belonging to their sect, it is a fact, exceedingly obvious to an accurate observer, that no instances of worldly misfortune elicit so much ardent compassion and sympathy among them as matrimonial differences of opinion. This peculiar species of charity was particularly evident on the present occasion, though each of the pitying ladies, as she threw a heart-broken sort of glance on the unfortunate gentleman, felt determined to check all verbal expression of her feelings for the present, in consequence of the close proximity of his uncongenial wife.

This feeling, indeed, was so general among them that the only words uttered audibly, were from the lips of Mrs. General Pedmington, and merely consisted of this cautious phrase, "At a future opportunity, sir, I trust we may meet again."

At this moment the stewardess entered, and the solitary lady passenger, who, as related above, had not joined in making the major free of the cabin, addressed her with some asperity, saying—

"If you knew your business, mistress, I expect I should not be kept out of my berth, when I want to get into it, by having the ladies' cabin turned into a chapel. If you won't turn that male passenger out, I must go and find the captain, that's all."

It will readily be believed that the intrusion of Major Allen Barnaby into the ladies' cabin, did not continue long after this hint. He just paused to give one circular glance of grateful acknowledgment to the fair friends he left there, and then sprang up the narrow stairs with the activity of fifteen.

When the passengers were disembarking on the following morning, the major took care to be on the gangway for the purpose of offering his hand to the ladies of the Needle Steeple congregation as they stepped across the plank; a civility which was graciously received by them all, and in the case of Mrs. General Pedmington, rewarded by a whispered renewal of the invitation to Mount Lebanon.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON reaching the first good-looking hotel near the landing-place, the reverend Mr. O'Donagough entered it, and immediately ordered the best rooms they had, especially mentioning, with much solemnity, the necessity of a quiet and undisturbed sitting-room.

"In course, sir," replied the landlady (for luckily for the major, it was a landlady and not a landlord, to whom he had addressed himself), "in course, sir, I know my duty to a gentleman such as you oo well, not to take care of that."

And sure enough the landlady did show them into a particular snug and quiet room, at the greatest possible distance from the noisy bar, and with so long a passage leading to it that it really seemed as if it had been built on purpose for seclusion. Having entered this room sedately, one by one, closed the door, and listened for a minute to the briskly retreating steps of the busy landlady, the major, his wife, and daughter, simultaneously threw themselves into three chairs, and forthwith indulged in such an unmitigated peal of laughter, as to make the startled and perplexed Tornorino look as if he thought they were all seized with a sudden fit of insanity. Nor did the observing this either induce or enable them to moderate their mirth, but perhaps had rather a contrary effect; and no wonder, for it is impossible to conceive a much more ludicrous contrast than that offered by the grave and weary-looking Don, and his laughter-shaken companions. At length, however, the convulsion passed, and then amidst the mutual compliments which were exchanged upon the perfect performance of the gentleman, the admirably discreet forbearance of his wife, together with a few gentle reproaches to Patty upon her dangerous want of self-control, the mystery was explained, and Tornorino made to understand all that had happened.

Another gay supper followed this triumphant recital of the clever scene; when it was agreed on all sides, that with such an admirable talent, and such brilliant success in the use of it, the major owed it to himself and his family to turn it to greater profit than merely throwing dust enough in the eyes of Mr. Gabriel Monkton, to puzzle him as to his identity.

"Upon my honour, Donny, you must make these ladies pay for your preaching, or I shall not be satisfied," said my heroine.

The major looked roguishly at her in return, and said—

"I am not sure, my Barnaby, but that you may be perfectly right as to the possibility of my making these exemplary females contribute a few dollars to the expenses of this particularly pleasant journey. But before you set me upon it, dear wife, let me beg you to remember that a good deal of sisterly and brotherly love-making must, in all human probability, take place before the result you anticipate can be looked for. Will not your fond heart feel some tender alarms, my dear, during your widowed residence at Pittsburg, knowing that I am thus employed at Sandusky?"

This sally produced a fresh burst of laughter, and Mrs. Allen Barnaby replied in admirable mock-heroic—

"Unquestionably, my love, I shall pine and I shall languish; nevertheless, such is my devotion to the common cause, that I will endure it all, rather than risk the loss of a single dollar, or," gracefully suiting the action to the word, "forfeit a single drop of this sparkling glass of champagne."

* * * * *

grade a little for the purpose of affording the reader a glimpse at some of the other personages introduced in it; and as my only real and legitimate heroine is at this time suspended, as it were, from all action, while awaiting at Pittsburg, the arrival of her husband from Sandusky, the present opportunity is particularly favourable for the purpose.

It is to be hoped that the kind and courteous reader remembers the position of affairs at Big-Gang Bank, at the time the Allen Barnaby party quitted it; and also the scene which followed between our young English friend Egerton, and his unwhilstable entertaining. The result of this was his immediately leaving the house, but not the neighbourhood; for, as may be likewise remembered, he had, while uttering his farewell to his particular friend, Miss Louisa Perkins, contrived to arrange an assignation with her for the evening at the house of Mrs. Clio Whitlaw.

Hurried as was the moment in which this arrangement was settled, he had contrived to make the worthy Louisa understand that this evening meeting would not be quite perfect unless the fair Annie were made a party to it. It must certainly have been owing to the experience which the elder Miss Perkins had gained in love matters, by having been a looker-on upon the great variety of such affairs in which the heart of her sister had been concerned, that she so immediately comprehended the state of the case respecting Annie Beauchamp and Mr. Egerton. Most certain it is, that they neither of them had ever breathed to her a single syllable explanatory of the state of their respective hearts, and yet the worthy spinster felt as certain of their being exceedingly in love with each other, as if she had been the confidant of both, from the first hour of their acquaintance to the last. In this respect, indeed, she had greatly the advantage of them, for although each by this time had a pretty tolerably clear idea of the truth respecting his or her own particular heart, they neither of them dared to believe that he or she had made any impression on the heart of the other. But although Miss Louisa felt as sure as sure could be, that the attachment was equal and mutual, she was not such a blundering agent as to hint this belief to her young friend, when she proposed to her the walk to Portico Lodge; she did not, indeed, even mention the name of Mr. Egerton; and whether Miss Beauchamp had overheard any part of the whisper by which the arrangement was made, it was impossible for Miss Louisa to guess, for the subject was never even alluded to between them. But, however this may be, the young lady made no objection to the proposal of the elder one, and they set off, arm-in-arm together, leaving the colonel and his wife expatiating to Miss Matilda upon the extraordinary virtue and talent of Mrs. Allen Barnaby, and the scandalous conduct of her young countryman, Mr. Egerton.

The two walking ladies were, perhaps, about equally

pleased to escape hearing this, and the satisfaction of having done so, brought a smile to the melancholy face of poor Annie; but it quickly passed away, for her heart was heavy and sad, and she moved on in total silence, feeling that if her very life had depended upon her talking, it would have been impossible. The good Louisa, however, seemed to understand all about it, and walked on beside her without uttering a sound that might interrupt her pretty companion's reverie.

Having thus reached in silence the entrance of Mrs. Whitlaw's domain, Miss Louisa stopped and looked about her. Annie coloured violently, but she stopped also, but it was only for an instant, for as if some thought had arisen in her mind leading her to disapprove this delay, she suddenly moved forward again, and with a much quicker step than before. But ere she reached the little gate through which they were to pass into Mrs. Whitlaw's shrubbery, Frederic Egerton stood before them.

Annie Beauchamp did not faint, although she became as pale as alabaster, and so strongly agitated was the young man also, that till Miss Perkins broke the silence, not a word was spoken. She did not, however, watch their embarrassment long without doing her very best, good soul, to remove it.

"I see how it is, my dear young friends," she said, "as plainly as if I was in both your hearts. What has happened this morning is certainly very unlucky for you both, but if I leave you by yourselves to talk it over, I hope and trust you will think upon something or other to set it all right again."

Egerton gave one look of gratitude to his kind ally, who instantly stepped forward, and then seizing the hand of Annie, he hastily exclaimed—

"Forgive this most involuntary abruptness, dearest Miss Beauchamp! Drive me not from you, as I was driven from your house this morning, but believe that if my respect, my reverence, equalled not my love, I should not thus implore you to be my wife in the only moment, and in the only manner that is left me."

There was a something (it is impossible to describe what) in the eyes of Annie as she raised them to the face of Egerton as he spoke, that seemed to save him from despair, though her first act (except looking at him) was to withdraw her hand; and her first words to say—

"If indeed you thus love me, Mr. Egerton, you will instantly overtake Miss Perkins, and bring her back to me."

It is possible that some young ladies might have spoken such words under similar circumstances, without either intending or expecting that they would or should be obeyed. But there is an intonation in the accents of truth, which when heard by ears intent upon discovering the exact meaning of what they listen to cannot easily be misunderstood.

Egerton had left the side of his beloved, and had taken the b

of Miss Perkins, in order to make her break in upon the *tête-à-tête*, which he would have given years of life to prolong, in less time, perhaps, than it had ever taken him before to bound over an equal space.

"She will not listen to me, my dearest Miss Perkins," said he, "unless you are beside her. Come back with me this moment, I entreat you."

The kind-hearted Louisa did not get over the ground with precisely the same sort of flying movement that Mr. Egerton had done, but she moved as rapidly as she could towards her young friend; and though in the interpretation of her feelings she had not now the advantage of any great experience, from having watched similar emotions in her sister, she seemed, somehow or other, to comprehend that it was possible, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, that poor Annie might be in earnest in wishing to have her back again.

When the trio were thus once more reunited, Annie Beauchamp attempted to say something which doubtless would have been very much to the purpose, but she failed, and instead of speaking, dropped her head upon the shoulder of Louisa, and burst into tears.

"Poor dear child!" exclaimed the gentle spinster. "She was greatly shocked, Mr. Egerton, by what took place this morning, as I dare say you can guess, sir, pretty well, and therefore you know she must not be hurried now."

"Hurried!" cried Egerton, clasping his hands, and fixing his eyes upon the weeping girl, with an air and manner that seemed to say he could be contented to stand thus gazing upon her for ages. "Oh no! she shall not be hurried, Miss Perkins; let her but give me hope for the future, however distant, and she shall see how absolute her power is over me."

Annie raised her head, and fixed her beautiful eyes, all tearful as they were, upon him. The first overwhelming transition from doubting, trembling hope, to delicious certainty was over, and the firm but gentle energy of Annie Beauchamp, immediately displayed itself.

"Not for a knowledge of my sentiments shall you wait, Mr. Egerton," said she; "I have been somewhat over prompt, it may be, in days past, to make you fully comprehend the extent of my prejudices, and I will not be afraid to let you see, that strong as they were, they were not so inveterate as to stand against truth, honour, and generosity. I know nothing of your family or fortune, but I know you, and thus far will I profit by my American freedom. I will promise you, Mr. Egerton, never to be the wife of any other man, so long as it shall continue to be your wish that I should become yours. Nay, nay, you must not thank me thus vehemently," she added, as he seized her hand and covered it with kisses; "for it may be that all I have said, and all I have the power to say, shall mean nothing more than the expression of my gratitude for sentiments so dearly valued, that were my mother and

father willing, I would not deem my whole life too long a space to be employed in proving how very precious they are to me. But, alas! Mr. Egerton, how can we hope, after what has passed this morning, that I can ever be your wife without ceasing to be their child? And this, at once and for ever, let me declare to you, I never will do! I will not give you as a companion for life, a guilty daughter, whose remorse would grow more bitter every day she lived. This I will never do."

"Nor will I ever ask it of you, Annie," replied Egerton, with sincerity equal to her own. "I could not love you as I do, did I not in my very soul believe that you are as good as you are beautiful. But, dearest, I do not despair of obtaining the consent of Colonel Beauchamp, and even of your mother, Annie, angry as she is with me at this moment. I have romance enough about me, I confess, to rejoice at having heard the precious words you have uttered, while you were still ignorant of my fortune and position in the world; and as those dear words are recorded where they will endure as long as life and memory are lent me, I may now tell you freely, that my estate, and the settlement I shall propose to your father, are not such as to offer a reason for his rejecting me. My family is honourable, and very nobly connected; and what I think will weigh far more with you, dearest Annie, than either, I flatter myself I can refer with honest confidence to the guardians who have had charge of me from the death of my father to the time of my coming of age, as well as to Eton and Oxford, where I received my education, for testimony that my actions have hitherto brought no disgrace upon my name."

"Ah, Mr. Egerton," returned Annie, with both a sigh and a smile, "all this would have gone very far yesterday towards obtaining such an answer as you wish. But I fear that as yet you have no idea of the anger conceived against you, both for your unfortunate parley with the slaves in the rice grounds, and your accusations against the husband of that terrible Mrs. Barnaby. Indeed, indeed, I fear that you would not be listened to upon such a subject for a single instant."

"Neither will I venture to ask it, dearest Annie," he replied. "I feel perfectly certain of being able to bring evidence of the truth of all I have said respecting this major, and if I do so, my motives for having warned your father of his practices, must surely be justly appreciated; and as to the other offence imputed to me, a very short time must surely suffice to prove that I have at least done nothing productive of any mischievous result."

"You speak so hopefully, Mr. Egerton," she replied, "that you make me think you must know better about it all than I do. But you will allow that time must be given, both for your inquiry about the major, and for the negative proof of your innocence respecting the poor slaves. But this last imputation will, I doubt not, *carry*, if they all remain quiet."

“And time shall be patiently given by me, sweet Annie, provided you promise that I may now and then hear from you. Of course I shall leave this place to-night, as it certainly would look like plotting and planning mischief were I to be found lurking here, after the scene of this morning. How I bless the speaking paleness of your fair face, dearest, which gave me courage to ask our kind friend here, for this interview! How different will be my departure now, from what in that first dreadful moment I feared it would have been! And you will write to me, Annie? First addressed to the post-office at New York; for it is thither, as I understand, that my precious countryman has taken himself, and it is thither that I shall immediately follow; but you will write to me, and promise to receive my letters in return?”

Annie looked in the face of Miss Perkins, and would at that moment have given a good deal if the kind feelings she so plainly saw written there, had been more mingled with the tougher quality of good sense. Poor girl! She longed for an English opinion that might have been trusted, as to the propriety of complying with the request of Egerton. To refuse him seemed almost beyond her strength; yet, conscious of her total ignorance of English etiquette in such matters, she shrunk from the idea of consenting to do what was unusual. Egerton saw the struggle, and understood it.

“Are you not my affianced wife, Annie? Conditionally, it is true; but still you are pledged to me. And am I not, still more, your affianced husband? For I have offered my vows unshackled by any condition whatever. Think you, then, that I would ask you to do anything that I would not sanction in my own sister, were I happy enough to have one?”

“I will write to you,” said Annie, gently, “if you desire me to do it.”

“And will you receive my letters, dearest?” he rejoined, after once again fervently kissing her hand.

“Yes, Mr. Egerton, I will,” she replied, with something almost approaching to solemnity in her manner. “But in both cases it must be done by the assistance of Miss Perkins; for it must not be from me that my parents first learn what has passed between us.”

It will easily be believed that the good Louisa raised no difficulties upon this point, and Frederic Egerton looked quite as happy as it was possible for a man to do who was on the very eve of parting with his beloved.

All this had passed in a shady and obscure retreat in a rustic summer-house, at no great distance from the entrance to Mrs. Whitlaw's grounds, into which Annie, who knew it well, had almost unconsciously entered, immediately after Miss Perkins had rejoined her. And now she rose to leave it, saying to that excellent person as she did so—

“I cannot visit Mrs. Whitlaw now, Miss Louisa—I should not

comprehend a single word she said to me. Farewell, Mr. Egerton!" and she held out her hand to him, "Farewell!"

Before this sad word was uttered between them for the last time, the eyes of the whole party bore witness that they did not separate with indifference; for on seeing the emotion of her young friends, the tender-hearted Louisa wept for company.

But part they must, and part they did at last; but not till the lovers had confessed to each other, that despite the obstacles which thus drove them asunder, that hour was the happiest of their lives.

CHAPTER XLIV.

So very little space is left for detailing the last scenes of the Barnabys in America, that they must needs be passed over very lightly. It is hardly necessary, after what the reader knows already, to state that the reception of the reverend Mr. O'Donagough at Mount Lebanon was everything his heart could wish. Young ladies and old, brown ladies and fair, all vied with each other how they best might prove their reverence for his character and admiration for his talents. It is true that the gentlemen of Sandusky, did not put themselves to much trouble to do the honours of the town to the industrious major; but neither did they, on the other hand, at all interfere to check the hospitalities of the ladies, so that the time he remained there he might truly be said to have been living in clover.

It must be remembered, however, that Major Allen Barnaby, though for particular reasons alone at Sandusky, was not alone in the world—at any rate, he himself never forgot that he had a wife and daughter, whose worldly welfare depended as much upon his exertions in one way, as the unworldly welfare of the serious ladies of the lake did in another; and it therefore happened, as all persons blessed with an acute perception of character must have foreseen, that he had not remained many days amongst them, before he made it understood that the hand of fortune had been as penurious to him as that of nature had been bountiful.

Were this chapter of his adventures at the beginning of the first volume instead of being at the end of the third, I might be tempted to describe at some length the various ways in which his conjugal and paternal affections acted as siphons upon the female pockets of this amiable inland sea population; but the time is past for this, and I must therefore content myself with stating that for *nearly a month the reverend Mr. O'Donagough lived upon the fattest fat of the Sandusky land, and that seldom a day passed during this period without adding a dollar or two on some* 17

tence or other to his resources. The liberality of Mrs. General Pedmington, indeed, was not restrained to such little offerings as these, for ere he parted she presented her new friend with five hundred dollars for the embellishment of his humble chapel in England, upon condition, affectionately expressed and fully understood, that he should revisit Mount Lebanon before his departure for the old country.

It was not, perhaps, the least agreeable feature of this delightful month, that the major during the course of it had the singular gratification of hearing himself perpetually talked of, described, and condemned to all sorts of pains and penalties, as one of the most audacious swindlers that ever ventured to poach on the native preserves of the Union, while he sat tranquilly by, uttering an occasional "alas!" at the strange depravity of human nature.

At length, however, some feelings of weariness began to creep, like a mildew, over the delights of the Mount Lebanon reunions; not indeed among the charming society to its manners born, but to the stranger, who had first to learn their ways and then to adopt them. It was amidst showers of tears that the sisters of the Needle Steeple congregation took their last reluctant leave of the gentle major, and the judicious tenderness with which he graduated his farewell benedictions to them all, had in it a delicacy of tact, that upon recollection positively surprised himself, and caused him to exclaim as so many have done before him, "No man knows what he is capable of performing till he tries."

Can it be doubted that the meeting with his family at Pittsburg was delightful? Or that Mrs. Allen Barnaby was rewarded with more than one glass of her favourite wine, for having so long and so patiently endured the absence of her beloved husband?

And at Pittsburg, as before decided, they took into consideration the comparative advantages of risking returning for a few days to New Orleans, or its neighbourhood, which could be done with perfect convenience by water, or of travelling across the Alleghany mountains to Baltimore for the purpose of embarking for Europe. Against the first, there was the danger of the major's being recognised as the hero of the Big-Gang Bank festivities. Against the last, was the expense and fatigue of a long land journey, with the doubt whether the major would be much safer there than at New Orleans.

Patty, whose fears from discovery were of a considerably graver nature than those of the rest of the party, protested strongly against returning to New Orleans, declaring that though "pap" did sometimes put her into dreadful passions by being so stingy of his money to her and the Don, she did not want to have him hanged. Few ladies, on the whole, could be less victims of delicate sensibility than my beautiful bride, yet nevertheless, she now exhibited considerable feeling, for upon her mother saying that she thought

they would be all safe at New Orleans if they did but take a little care, and put up at the further end of the town from Mrs. Carmichael's boarding-house, she burst out upon her with great vehemence, and declared that she believed in her heart that she was looking forward to being a widow again, and making conquests.

The major was a good deal touched by this testimony of his daughter's affection, but being himself very strongly in favour of the New Orleans scheme, he told her, after a hearty hug, that he was excessively obliged to her for her kindness, and that the fear of vexing her if anything went wrong with him, would be as likely to make him careful as the dread of the galls itself.

"But if you could have seen me at Mount Lebanon, my darling, you would have been cured at once and for ever of all fears on my account. I really did not know my own powers before, Patty, but now, I declare to you upon my word and honour, I would rather have the fun of bamboozling the natives than not. I would venture to bet five thousand to one against any one of those we saw at New Orleans knowing me again, if I did not choose they should do so. Besides, my dear, I have another word to say in favour of the New Orleans plan. I heard from many people, while I was at Sandusky, that it would be a sin and a shame to leave the country without spending a few weeks at Natchez, which for pleasant amusements and all that" (and here the major gave a sidelong glance of intelligence to his wife and the Don) "is quite New Orleans in miniature. And, moreover, by reposing ourselves there for a little while, it would be easy enough to leave when there was a good vessel going to start for Havre, and our places might be easily secured on board her without our ever making our appearance in the city till the very day she set off. I vote, therefore, for our making our way by the Ohio and the Mississippi to Natchez, and remaining exactly as long as we find it agreeable, and not an hour longer."

This scheme seemed to satisfy all parties, and was accordingly acted upon forthwith. The long river voyage was performed with much less tediousness than any of them expected, for the major and his son-in-law scarcely ever passed an idle hour while they were on board, nor one that was not more or less profitable, for this long line of river travelling is as remarkable for its industrious gambling, as for any other of its agreeable features.

As to Mrs. Allen Barnaby and Patty, they found means to amuse themselves exceedingly well, though they played neither at whist nor piquet. There were several ladies on board, who by asking them, day after day, incessant questions respecting themselves, gave them both such an opportunity of vapouring about their European grandeur as kept them in perpetual good humour, so that they all arrived at Natchez in excellent spirits, and ready to meet whatever adventures might chance to befall them with sharp wits and sturdy courage.

It took but little time to convince Major Allen Barnaby that the information he had received respecting the social and intellectual advancement of the population of this flourishing little town, was perfectly correct; it realised all his hopes and exceeded all his expectations, so that for rather more than two months that the party remained, he had scarcely a single misadventure or disappointment of any kind to recount to his faithful wife.

This steady current of good fortune, however, only served in the long run to convince him that with his talents and advantages (his son-in-law ranking higher and higher every day among the latter) he could not do himself justice while carrying on business in so small a way. His high-minded wife, also, was most decidedly of the same opinion, and being, moreover, as well as her daughter, heartily tired of the town and everything in it, the feminine influence of the family was put forth with considerable activity; while even the peaceable Tornorino, though exceedingly well pleased by a few well-timed donations from his father-in-law, began to hint now and then, in a gentle murmur, that "de vin vas not ver good."

In a word, their speedy departure was fixed and decided upon a certain evening when little or nothing had been done at the usual place of meeting; and on the following morning the major started alone for New Orleans by an early steamboat, intending to disembark a mile or two above the town, and to proceed early on the following morning direct to the quays, where the large vessels bound to Europe were sure to be found, the costume he assumed for this expedition was that of the reverend Mr. O'Donagough, over which, on leaving his lodging he threw a large cloak to prevent any observations from his neighbours, and quietly walked on board, in all outward respects so utterly unlike the military gentleman who had figured as an East Indian of a large fortune, during his residence at Natchez, that there was certainly very little chance of his being recognised.

While he is prosperously borne by tide and steam towards the place of his destination, we will rapidly follow the fortunes of Mr. Egerton, from the time he left the side of Annie Beauchamp in pursuit of him.

In the first instance he proceeded, in consequence of the information he had received, to New York, and devoted himself most indefatigably to the task of discovering if any such personage as Major Allen Barnaby was to be found there. Not a single hotel, boarding, or lodging-house of tolerable respectability was left unquestioned, and such was the zeal and perseverance, of his perquisition, that had the major been in the city he could scarcely have escaped it. But during the days thus employed, our major and his family were, as the reader well knows, at Philadelphia.

Being at length reluctantly convinced that no Major Allen

Barnaby was to be found there, Mr. Egerton returned to New Orleans, convinced that he had begun his search very unadvisedly in taking it for granted that his slippery countryman was likely to be found where he said he should be, and determined for the future to trace him step by step, on surer evidence than his own word. He ventured not, however, to present himself, at Big-Gang Bank, but obtained from his fair correspondent there, all the particulars she could gather from the slaves who had attended upon the Allen Barnaby party, as to the place to which they had conducted them. To this place he immediately repaired, but though the party as described by him were perfectly well remembered at the principal hotel there, he found it impossible to ascertain with certainty whither they went afterwards. Most of the people of the house declaring that they went to New York, while one or two porters positively stated that their luggage was put on board a vessel going to Philadelphia.

In this dilemma, the young man had recourse to his own judgment as to which was most probable, and although he had already satisfactorily convinced himself that, in the first instance, he certainly did *not* go to New York, he still thought his chance of finding him would be better if he again returned to that city, in the hope of his having visited it subsequently, than waste his time and trouble by going to Philadelphia, knowing enough of the style of its society to be convinced that if the object of his search had really been there he did not stay long.

To New York, therefore, he again repaired, but not till Major Allen Barnaby had left it about four-and-twenty hours. But though he found not him, he found enough concerning him to add proof to conviction as to his character. For here chance favoured him, by sending him upon his arrival to the same house in which the illustrious English family had boarded, and his very first inquiry brought forth from the party at the dinner table where it was made, the most violent burst of indignation against the major, who was declared by the whole company to be the most atrocious swindler that ever lived. Beyond this, however, he gained little information sufficiently authentic to be of any use to him.

He had been traced to the Springs, they said, and clearly recognised as the suspicious individual to whom Mr. Gabriel Monkton had devoted so much attention. But beyond the deck of the steam-boat all trace of him was lost; and that how, when, and where he got on shore, no one knew, or, notwithstanding the national propensity, could even venture to guess. Mr. Monkton had declared that he had himself watched every passenger that had left the boat, both at Cleveland and at Sandusky, and that Major Allen Barnaby was most certainly not amongst them. It was, however, the general opinion of the whole party that he had escaped the very active pursuit after him, by travelling "pretty considerable is

west," such being, as they said, the universal custom of all the gentry who had made the "Old States" too hot to hold them.

The evident probability that this was the fact, was a severe disappointment to poor Egerton, who had hoped to return to the house of Colonel Beauchamp with such confirmation of his statement respecting the major, as might have restored the confidence and friendly feeling of himself and wife, in greatly less time than it would take him to reach the "far west," and obtain such legal confirmation of what he had asserted, as could admit of no contradiction or evasion. The news he had of the runaway at New York was, however, such as very satisfactorily strengthen his hopes of obtaining this could he overtake him, and he therefore once more set forth with no other guide than what was furnished by a list of the various towns through which he was likely to pass, or where he might have been tempted to tarry. This very laborious expedition, however, proved entirely abortive, and at length, weary and depending, he gave up the chase, and determined upon returning with all speed to New Orleans (where Annie's letters informed him the family would soon be settled for the winter), with no better proof of what he had stated, than the reports he had heard at New York.

Harassed, and out of spirits, Egerton was traversing the galley-walk of the steam-boat that was taking him his last day's voyage towards the place of his destination, when the boat stopped to take in wood and passengers at Natchez. The young man was in no very speculative humour; and though he listlessly bent over the rail as if to watch the comers and goers, he in reality paid but little attention to any of them.

There was one figure, however, which, notwithstanding his abstraction, drew his attention and fixed it. This was a peculiarly nice-looking elderly gentleman, dressed in black, whose whole dress and aspect declared him to be of the clerical profession, and whose remarkable quietness of demeanour offered a strong contrast to the half horse, half alligator population, of which the passengers were almost entirely composed. This venerable personage entered the vessel and moved onward, without looking either to the right or to the left, and in doing so, passed close to Mr. Egerton, but without seeing him. The profile of this respectable gentleman struck Egerton as being very like that of some individual whom he had seen, he knew not where or when, and he followed him with the sort of curiosity which this imperfect kind of recollection always produces.

When the stranger reached the gallery in front of the great cabin, he seated himself for a moment on a sofa that was placed there, and with his hands rather formally crossed upon his breast, lifted his mild eyes and looked about him. In this circular glance he caught sight of Mr. Egerton, and in doing so started, evidently,

at least to the young man himself, whose eye was fixed upon him ; but not sufficiently to attract the attention of any other person.

This involuntary movement on the part of the respectable gentleman in black, naturally attracted a more scrutinising glance from Egerton in return, and then, though the reverend personage was moving away, and that a portion only of his face was visible, he instantly became convinced that he saw before him the man he was seeking. His own mode of proceeding was immediately decided on. The start and the sudden departure showed him both that he was recognised and avoided, and he determined, while strictly keeping watch over him, that he would show no symptom of recollecting their having met before.

At the dinner table, the black-coated gentleman took his place with the rest of the company ; but Egerton while taking care to look around him with an equal air of indifference upon them all, was aware that his looks, words, and gestures were carefully watched by the stranger. He felt certain if his *ci-devant* acquaintance perceived that he was known, in spite of his disguise, he would bolt at the first station at which the boat should stop to take in wood for the engine ; but so well did he contrive to look at the man, as if he had never seen him before, that our major (for most surely it was himself) became perfectly reassured, and fully confirmed in the agreeable conviction that when he chose to disguise himself, nobody could find him out. The reverend Mr. O'Donagough therefore (it was thus that his carpet-bag was labelled) continued his voyage to New Orleans, with no further precaution than taking care not to speak within hearing of Mr. Egerton, lest his ear might prove more discerning than his eye.

It was as dark as an American night could well be, when they reached New Orleans, and Egerton, aware that it would be impossible to watch his suspicious fellow-traveller without following him too closely to avoid being watched in his turn, very cleverly enlisted in his service a negro-lad, who had charge of a neatly-ornamented bird-cage, containing a fine mocking-bird, to whom during many hours of the day he had been teaching various tunes. This rather amusing occupation first caused Mr. Egerton to notice him, and the sable youth giving sundry indications of sharp-wittedness in his answers, it struck him that a dollar might be well bestowed in securing his services as a spy. The offer was promptly made and promptly accepted. The reverend Mr. O'Donagough paid no attention whatever to the young slave and his bird-cage, who having seen the parson-gentleman safely housed at an obscure inn, returned swiftly to his employer, who was awaiting him at a well-known hotel near the landing-place.

The diligence and intelligence of the lad induced Egerton to inquire if he could serve him further, and he was readily answered in the affirmative ; the young slave stating that he was the property

of a pretty young lady, who was very good-natured and would not scold him, even if he did stay out of the house a bit now and then.

No arrangement could be more favourable for his purpose, as no agent could be employed less likely to excite suspicion; and accordingly, having paid him in a style very effectually to answer his zealous services, he made the youth understand enough of his object to render them available, and then repaired to the post-office, where, according to promise, he found a letter from Annie.

She told him that their removal to New Orleans was postponed, in consequence of some plantation business, which was to be completed before they left the premises, but that she thought he might venture to pay them a visit, "if he wished it," as both her father and mother had first become affronted, and then suspicious, in consequence of never having received a single line from their dear friend Mrs. Allen Barnaby, from the time she had left them. Moreover, their far-off neighbour, Mr. Hapford, having at length recovered from a violent fit of the gout, had been at the bank and declared his conviction of having been cheated at play by the whiskered Englishman whom he had met there at his last visit.

All this, as Annie gently observed, would greatly lessen the probability of his being rudely received if he came to visit them. His fair correspondent then went on to say, that she thought poor Louisa Perkins, to whom he had always shown so much kindness, was greatly in want of some friend to put her in the way of getting back to England, for that though she and her sister were come again to the Bank, after making a circle of visits among the people who most wished to honour Mrs. Allen Barnaby, it was very evident that her father and mother wanted to get rid of them, and Annie said, she greatly feared they would not much longer delay letting them perceive this, in a manner that it would greatly pain her to witness.

This long letter was read twice through, and then Egerton, having kissed the signature, folded the precious paper carefully, and placed it, like its rather numerous predecessors, under the protection of a Bramah lock, began to meditate upon the difficult problem of how he could set off instantly to obey the summons it contained, yet not lose sight of the major before he could learn a little more concerning him. That of these two apparently incompatible objects, the first was in his estimation the most important, was proved by his instantly ringing for a waiter, and despatching him to secure a place in the next coach that left New Orleans in the direction he wished to go. No such conveyance, however, was to depart till the following morning, and before he went to rest, his black ally inquired for him, and was shown into his room. His report was as follows:—

The parson gentleman was called the reverend Mr. O'Donn-

ugh; he was going to Havre; wanted four first-rate berths; and his family at Natchez; should go and fetch them in time to sail; the "Lady Anne," which was the name of the vessel in which he was going, was not to sail for ten days; and finally, the reverend gentleman himself had already started off again in a sloop for Natchez.

It was impossible any intelligence could be more agreeable. If Colonel Beauchamp still wished for any further information respecting his late honoured guests, there was time enough for the purpose before they sailed, and moreover their young accuser would have no satisfaction of conveying the important intelligence, that they had again thought it convenient to change their name.

Egerton slept soundly, though dreaming all night of Annie, and arrived without delay or accident of any kind, within half an hour's walk of Big-Gang Bank. It was long since Frederic Egerton had experienced emotions of so much happiness as at the moment he set off upon this walk. The letter of Annie had, perhaps, more of shyness and less of love than any of her former ones, but he interpreted this very correctly, and was certainly not the less happy for it.

"Annie fancies," thought he, "that I am already almost in her presence, and must not be spoiled by too much indulgence."

Thus gaily thinking, he went bounding on, and had reached the palings that surround Mrs. Whitlaw's property, which, ardently as he wished to advance with all possible speed, almost induced him to stop that he might gaze upon the objects which had surrounded him when Annie had first promised that she would never be the wife of another.

But the question whether he should pause or not was not left to him to decide, for just as he reached the little gate by which he had formerly entered the premises, Nina, the favourite slave of his beloved, rushed out and seized his arm.

"Thank God, Mr. Egerton," she exclaimed, "I have not watched for you in vain. My mistress is here, Miss Annie is here—come in—come in! You must not go a single step farther towards the Bank."

Delighted to find that Annie was so near, and thinking perhaps that she had come thither, and set her favourite to watch for him, that she might give him some word of advice or instruction before he saw her parents, Egerton followed the rapidly retreating figure of Nina, till he once more found himself in the flowery portico of the good Clio's elegant abode. Notwithstanding the advanced season, the windows were open, and another step placed him before the eyes of Annie Beauchamp.

Though the slave Nina had so evidently expected him, it was really plain that her young mistress did not, for the agitation of her mind was for a moment too great to permit her speaking; but

tears of emotion were blended with smiles of happiness as she yielded her beautiful hand to his caresses, almost without a struggle. When at length she found her voice, she exclaimed—

“How can it be that I see you here, Mr. Egerton? I confess, I have been hoping for your arrival at the Bank for two days past, but what has made you come here? Have you seen my father?”

“I am right down glad he is here, Annie,” interrupted Mrs. Whitlaw, cordially offering her hand to Egerton. “I saw how it was going on with his heart when he was here before. And what could he do better, Annie, than come here to meet you, and tell you all about it? Perhaps, you know, my dear, he may not be that much at his ease with Madame Beauchamp and the colonel as he might be with you and I.”

Egerton related his meeting with Nina at the gate, and whispered to Annie that she confessed she was waiting for him.

“Silly girl,” exclaimed the young lady, blushing, “I dare say she knew that I was expecting you; but most surely I never told her to waylay you in this strange style, Mr. Egerton.”

“Let not the kind zeal in my service bring reproof on her,” he replied, laughing. “I shall remember it with gratitude, my Annie, as long as I live.”

A very interesting conversation then followed, in which Mr. Egerton narrated his discovery of the disguised major on board the steamboat, which Annie assured him would be more than sufficient to convince her father and mother that he was indeed all that they had been so kindly warned to expect they should find him.

And then followed a discussion, in which Mrs. Whitlaw joined, as to the best mode of Mr. Egerton's presenting himself. Should he accompany Annie home? Should Annie precede him, or should he precede her? She declared that she had not courage to announce his approach; and it was at length agreed that he should proceed to the Bank alone, endeavour to see both her parents, inform them of all he had learned concerning Major Allen Barnaby, and then venture to ask if they considered this as proof sufficient of his being a man of honour. If the answer was favourable, he was to go on to express all his hopes, and ask their consent to his wishes.

Having received the sanction of Annie and her affectionate friend for this, he left them, and had already again reached the little gate which opened from the lawn, and which was not within sight of the house, when once more he was met by Nina. He had observed that she looked hurried and agitated when he first met her, but she was now infinitely more so, and when she found from the direction he took, and the words he said, that he was hastening to Colonel Beauchamp's house, she threw herself on the ground before him, and with tears and sobs implored him to go back.

No room is left me to describe at length the scene which fol-

lowed. Finding that nothing she could say could dissuade Egerton from executing the plan which had been sanctioned by Agnes, she uttered a groan that made him shudder, and exclaimed—

“Then I must break my oath and sacrifice my life for her, and what is dearer to her than herself. If you go to my master’s house, young gentleman, you will be murdered !”

Even after this it was some time before the terrified and reluctant girl could be made to explain herself fully ; but at length she confessed, amidst sobs and groans, that the slaves on the colonel’s property, and that of the neighbouring plantation, which belonged to Judge Johnson, were in revolt, and stood bound by a tremendous oath to murder every white person of whatever age or sex that should come across them while in the act of securing whatever portable property of value they could find in either mansion. They had arranged, she said, to escape to the numberless hiding-places known to them in the neighbouring forests, where they could long subsist upon the food they meant to carry with them, and expected finally to get off by means of the money of which they expected to get possession, and because no one would be left alive in either estate to pursue them. To the execution of this wild and horrible project they had all engaged themselves by the most solemn vows ; “ and rather would they fail and die,” cried the girl, “ than live to endure more years of misery.”

Egerton’s first object was to restore the agitated Nina to such a degree of composure as might enable her to tell him how long this scene of horror had been in action, and where she imagined her master and mistress to be.

At length he learned from her, but not without considerable difficulty, that when the oath was first proposed to her, she refused to take it, but was told that if she persevered in this, she would be kidnapped away, and kept a close prisoner till all was over. She then took it, but with the understanding (after long battling for it) that she might save the white females if she could ; but that if she attempted to save the life of a white man, she would herself be murdered. She told him also that after prevailing on Miss Annie to pay a visit to Mrs. Whitlaw, she had got Mrs. Beauchamp and the Miss Perkinses into the dairy-house, under pretence that Miss Annie wanted to show them something there ; and that having previously secured the windows, she had locked them in, and then ran away.

Egerton’s first thought, after hearing this terrifying statement, was concerning the safety of Annie. He told the trembling slave to fear nothing, but carefully to watch her young mistress, and if she attempted to leave her present shelter, to tell Mrs. Whitlaw the whole truth that she might restrain her, even by force, if necessary. He then obtained the key of the dairy-house, the situation of which he well knew, determined that his first obje

should be the conveying the ladies confined in it to Mrs. Whitlaw's, and then to trust to being recognised as an Englishman, while he risked a visit to Colonel Beauchamp's house in the faint hope of saving its wretched master.

Light of foot, firm in nerve, and steadfast in purpose, he lost no moment after deciding what to do. He found the three ladies in a state of dreadful alarm; for no sooner did Mrs. Beauchamp discover that they were prisoners, than she guessed the truth, for by an infatuation difficult to comprehend, the lives of the planters seem pretty equally divided between tyrannising over their slaves, and trembling at the chance of their taking vengeance for it. Very few words passed between them, Egerton saying in that tone of decision which at such moments is all powerful—

"Mrs. Beauchamp, give me your arm; follow us closely, Miss Perkins, with your sister. I will take you to a place of safety where you will find Miss Beauchamp, and then I will seek the colonel."

Not a word was uttered in reply; nothing, I believe, silences talkers effectually but terror and sea-sickness. It was the wish and will of Egerton that they should walk quickly, but they had no other difficulty to contend with, for the negroes were too busy at their work of pillage to be at many yards' distance from the house. On reaching the friendly abode of the good Clio, they found that Nina, in her restless anxiety, had already told both her and Annie all she had previously told Egerton. The delight of Annie at seeing her mother in safety may be imagined, nor is it needful to dwell upon the amount of her gratitude to Egerton. But dreadful was the combat at her heart when she saw him about to plunge into danger so dreadfully certain, in the desperate hope of saving her unhappy father. Yet, could she bid him stay? It was impossible. Fortunately perhaps for her reason the interval of suspense was very short. On leaving the house he met one of Mrs. Whitlaw's domestic blacks. Her slaves, though much too well treated, too lazy, and too happy, to join in the insurrection, were still negroes, and as such most ardently interested in the success of their less happy fellow slaves. The man was returning from the scene of outrage, and seeing Egerton, whom he remembered as an English visitor, hurrying towards it, he civilly stopped him and begged him to return.

"Colonel Beauchamp——" said the panting Egerton.

"He has been dead this hour, sir," returned the negro, casting down his eyes, but very nearly smiling at the same moment; "and Judge Johnson," he added, in the same respectful tone, "has been done for longer still."

It is needless to dwell on the scenes which followed. Mrs. Whitlaw assured her agitated neighbours that they were now in no danger, but that as their former residence would offer a scene too

painful for them to look upon, their best course would be to accept the loan of her carriage and horses, and set off for New Orleans, or perhaps for New York, directly.

"For England! dearest Mrs. Beauchamp!" exclaimed Egerton. "Accept from me the duty, the affection, the protection of a son, and let me accompany you to England."

All that was likely to make this scheme appear desirable to the agitated widow was soon explained to her; the Misses Perkins seemed ready to take upon themselves the duties of the slaves she had lost, so they might be permitted to accompany her; and in short, for short it now must be, everything concerning what they left behind was consigned to the management of the friendly and prosperous Clio, and within twenty-four hours after Egerton's arrival he was on the road back to New Orleans, escorting his Annie, her mother, his two countrywomen, and the faithful Nina, to that city.

* * * * *

The tide had reached the point at which it is most favourable for vessels to work down the river from New Orleans to the Belize, and Egerton, with the party of females above enumerated, were waiting on the noble wharf for the arrangement of the ladder which was to assist them to get on board. Two fine vessels were at that moment preparing to depart for Europe, and the part of the wharf near which they both lay was crowded with spectators. In the midst of this crowd was a group, less quiet, and less sad-looking than their own, and which presently roused their attention by suddenly approaching them.

"My dearest Mrs. Beauchamp!" exclaimed my bold-hearted heroine, too secure of an immediate retreat to be afraid of anything.

"Goodness me! If there isn't the Perkinses!" cried Patty, clapping her hands.

"My dear ladies *our* ladder is ready," said the major, still enacting the character of the Rev. Mr. O'Donagough, and presenting his arm to his wife. Tornorino performed the same duty to his, and the whole party brushed by Mr. Egerton and his friends, none of whom gave a look or uttered a word of recognition, and mounted with every appearance of glee the "Lovely Anna," bound for home.

The party bound for England were also on board in a few minutes, and the two vessels followed each other closely down the river, the navigation of which, though slow, was perfectly prosperous, and Patty amused herself most delightfully during nearly the whole time it lasted by peeping at her old friends through a *telescope*, and proclaiming their quizzical looks to every one who would listen to her.

"The ingratitude of these Perkinses is perfectly disgusting," said Mrs. Allen Barnaby with a shrug. "Heaven knows they are all bundling to," she added, "but there is one thing I must promise me, my dearest Donny, and it is, that if I have the misfortune of falling in with any of that horridly set on the Continent, you will look at one and all of them as had never set eyes on them before."

THE END.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in the context of public administration and government operations. The text notes that such records are crucial for identifying trends, detecting anomalies, and ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

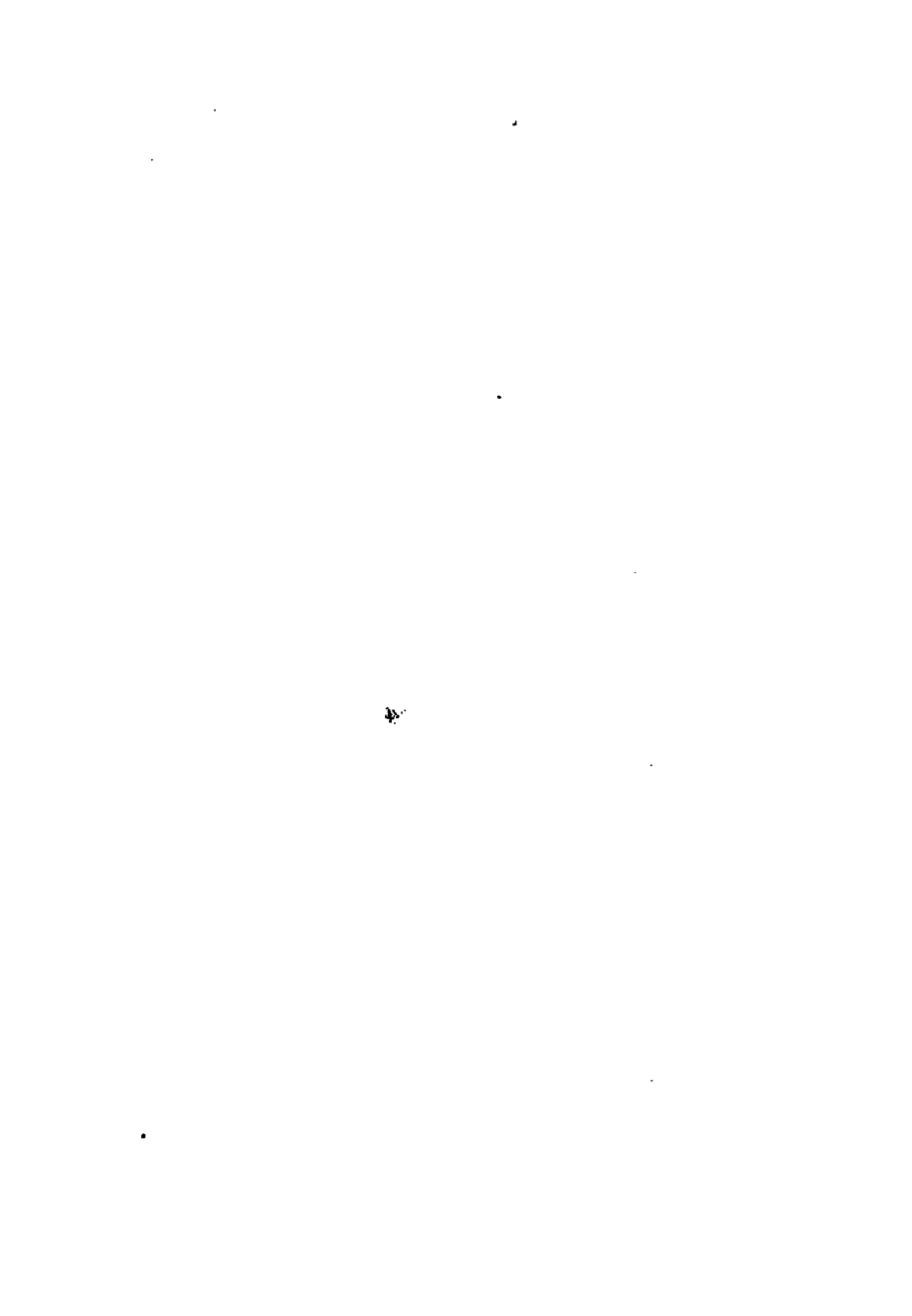
2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the use of both traditional and modern technologies, such as data mining and artificial intelligence, to process large volumes of information. The text stresses the need for robust data management systems that can handle complex and diverse data sources while ensuring data integrity and security.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the challenges and opportunities associated with data-driven decision-making. It acknowledges the potential for bias and error in data analysis but also points to the significant benefits of using data to inform policy and strategy. The text suggests that organizations should invest in training and development to build a data-literate workforce capable of interpreting and acting on data insights.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the ethical implications of data collection and analysis. It addresses concerns about privacy, consent, and the potential for misuse of data. The text advocates for the development of clear policies and guidelines that govern the use of data, ensuring that individual rights are protected and that data is used for legitimate purposes.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It reiterates the importance of a holistic approach to data management, one that integrates technical, organizational, and ethical considerations. The text concludes by encouraging continued research and innovation in the field of data science to further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of data-driven processes.







Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 019 691 422



